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THE FORTRESS DREAMS, AND WHILE IT DREAMS FALLS  
EVER SO SLOWLY INTO RUIN

# COLOMBIA LAND OF MIRACLES

BY

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY

ROBERT L. NILES, JR.



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To MY MOTHER  
GORDON PRYOR RICE



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## PREFACE

In Colombia we traveled by the longest hydroplane service in the world, and three days later journeyed by ox-cart to visit the falls of Tequendama. We were limp with tropic heat, and in seven hours we shivered in the cold of the high plateau. For in Colombia extremes of climate, of altitude, and of civilization meet. There the present and the past live for a moment side by side, almost on terms of equality; before both give place to the waiting wonder which is the future.

Because of this meeting of the centuries, one may realize the march of life from the days of astounding Spanish Conquest, of black magic, of miracle and saint; through revolution and subsequent struggle toward democracy; and finally to the ambitious present when man flies—flies from the coast into the heart of the Andes.

Contemplating all this, I fell into the way of thinking of the country as a land of miracles; taking miracle in its widest sense, as "a wonderful thing which excites admiration or astonishment," as "an act or manifestation of a spiritual power in the

universe," and as "a miraculous story; a legend."

No adequate portrait of Colombia can ignore any of these definitions, for it is from the sum of them all that the personality of the land emerges.

In the hope of capturing this personality, I have let the pageant of to-day move across the background of history, of tradition, and of legend. And in my great desire that the present should speak for itself in its own idiom, I have recorded events and conversations in a detail made possible by notes taken while words and impressions still warmly pulsed; before passing into the echo of memory.

BLAIR NILES.

New York City,  
1924.

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## COLOMBIA, LAND OF MIRACLES

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# COLOMBIA, LAND OF MIRACLES

## CHAPTER I

### WHEN ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE

**W**E glided gently through the narrow entrance, and as we passed I realized with a gasp of amazement that we on our White Fruit boat—we were too big for the forts!

Old books describe Cartagena's "frowning and menacing forts," designed to keep greedy pirates from entering the golden city. And I had pictured them thus grimly threatening. It was therefore astonishing to find ourselves looking down upon the might of the sixteenth century, positively towering above it; astonishing that the power which was Spain should show itself as two toy forts, facing the open ocean with embrasures empty and sentry-boxes deserted.

To eyes accustomed to the proportions of skyscrapers and ocean liners our ship had seemed small enough. Now, passing through the Boca Chica, be-

tween the ancient forts of San José and San Fernando, she appeared a Goliath. We and the famous forts were absurdly out of scale; for since their building, how busy has man been with his hands! When he first made a little sailing craft he had thought it a fine thing, saying to himself, "What a brave boy am I!" And he had then built little forts to destroy the little ships of other "brave boys." Then bigger ships and bigger forts, until we, on our modest steamer passing between those forts of yesterday, felt ourselves to be on board an ocean-going monster.

Through the Boca Chica we entered a spacious and tranquil bay, land-locked but for its two mouths: the Little Mouth, now its only entrance; and the Great Mouth, the Boca Grande, which three hundred years ago the Spaniards had caused to be closed, at immense cost of labor and money, for in those days no sum was too great to expend in the protection of their peerless Cartagena, their "Pearl of the Caribes."

Within the harbor the blue and sparkling water rippled in foamless waves from our path.

Hills surround this azure bay, as though a crown of emeralds had been laid upon the water; and at intervals along the shores, buried in the foliage of palm and banana and the massed scarlet of flowering



ON GUARD AT THE BOCA CHICA



trees, are tiny settlements roofed with thatch or tile. The ages have not diminished the shimmering sunlit beauty of the bay.

We followed a winding channel whose course is marked here and there by buoys. Solemn brown pelicans paused on the buoys, flying ahead at our approach, pausing upon another buoy, and again flying ahead. With gardenias in their buttonholes they would have made perfectly respectable double-chinned ushers, pompously showing the way.

They thus escorted us past the inner forts, past Manzanillo and Castillo Grande, with its little empty sentry-box white in the morning sun, suggesting in its whiteness and in its shape the minaret of an Oriental mosque. And again I had that sense of being so grotesquely too big!

We were steaming toward a city which, domed and walled and turreted, seemed to float on the surface of the water, as though, with only its glittering head yet visible, it paused in the act of miraculously rising from the still blue sheen of the bay; a city constructed bit by bit in my mind, and now magically coming true as we sailed slowly up the bay following the pelicans.

But we were still too big for the landscape, and it was not until after we had left the ship that I felt myself once more in scale with the environment.

For a few cents a little train carried us from the dock to the railroad station which stands outside the walls, and then in an old-fashioned low-swung victoria we drove through the gate under the clock-tower and into the walled city of Cartagena—Cartagena of the Indies.

Within there was heat and color; color and heat. The overhanging balconies almost touched hands across incredibly narrow streets. Color! Even the heavy gratings at the windows were vivid; blue or green against walls of vermilion or yellow or rose. Color trembling in white waves of heat.

We drove through a maze of narrow streets, streets like slits in a rainbow. And all at once, before the coach delivered us at the door of the hotel, I had forgotten all about the ship that was too big for the forts.

As though drugged with the heat and with the color, as though bewildered by the labyrinth of tortuous streets, I had slipped suddenly and completely out of the present and back—back to the year 1555; to the days when anything was possible.

In that year every tongue in Cartagena whispered the name of Rosaura. The daughter of a sorceress, she was thought to speak with peculiar authority, and there was in her eyes a look and on her lips a smile which, added to that dark art inherited from

her mother, combined to make Rosaura the sensation of her little earthly hour.

The old chroniclers talk about the witchery of that smile. They perpetuate the mysterious profundity of her eyes, as they recount the tales of her magic. She lived, they tell us, in as great luxury as any fine lady.

And surely it is proof of Rosaura's magic that she, a mulatto sorceress, was able to compete with grand ladies whose aristocracy was such that they might do nothing without the permission of their fathers or their husbands. Such ladies were too precious to be allowed to walk or ride unguarded in the streets, and scarcely was the light of the tropic day permitted to fall upon them. But for the fact that they were owned by men, they were almost as cloistered as nuns.

In the year 1555 it was thus a serious matter to be a lady, and those whose profession it was were as arrogant and haughty as a Chinese woman glorying in her deformed feet.

How suspicious those ladies of colonial Cartagena must have been! For the lordly men who possessed them sooner or later made their way to that house on the outskirts of the town where Rosaura smiled her sixteenth-century smile; smiled and drew aside the dark veil which separates the known from the occult.



She needed all her beauty, all the courage of her Spanish father, and all the cunning of her dusky mother; for slaves went with ceaseless gossip to their jealous mistresses, and holy zealots were active in the pursuit and persecution of black magic.

Rosaura's life was thus not dull. She never knew in the morning, when she fastened in her ears the heavy gold hoops, whether before sunset she might not be burned alive as a priestess of Satan. But in her rich silks from Spain and in the gleam of her jewels, Rosaura could shrug her smooth soft shoulders, defying the envious intrigues of proud ladies, defying even the far-reaching power of the church.

When I discovered Rosaura in the yellow pages of tradition, she was awaiting a visit from the treasurer, Saavedra. The great merchant, Juan Orozco, had first brought Saavedra to her. But although it was common talk that Orozco owed his wealth to the advice Rosaura gave him, still Saavedra had been skeptical.

Rosaura, I fancied, let her bracelets slip back and forth along her satin arms, listening absently to the metallic tinkle of bracelet against bracelet, while her eyes stared straight ahead, profound black deeps; and a little slow sigh slipped from her, a weary little sigh, for Rosaura faced the ordeal of creation.

“Saavedra,” she sighed, “Saavedra shall see what he shall see. . . .”

It is night, and Saavedra has come. Rosaura receives him in a tiny inner room. The walls and the ceiling of this room are painted black. One lantern relieves and yet accentuates the gloom; so placed that its light falls full upon a great earthenware tub which stands on a table in the center of the room. The water with which this tub is filled gleams in the lantern-light, like some dark Lilliputian lake across which a moonbeam has flung its path: the pale beam of a moon which has suddenly come out from behind the clouds of a starless sky, inky above some somber little world. And no faintest noise of the city penetrates this gloom.

The personality of Saavedra crowds the room: so cruel and bold is the stare of his black eyes in their bushy bristling frame, and so fierce are his black mustachios.

“So it is you!” Rosaura’s scornful lips show the gleam of teeth. “Coward, if you have fear, why do you seek again the opportunity to display it?”

The powerful Saavedra is strangely meek.

“I thought you deceived me—made game of me.”

“And now you come because the news from the

sea bears out all I showed you. Now that you know it to be true even to the day and the hour.

"Months ago I showed you here on the face of this water all that men are saying to-day in the market-place and in the plaza. I showed you the ship which carried Heredia to Spain. You even saw him pass along the deck leaning on the arm of his nephew. And you knew him to be beyond question Heredia, Governor of Cartagena.

"But you were a fool and a coward. You thought that I, Rosaura, made a mock of things so mysterious!

"Very well, why do you come again to the house of Rosaura?"

"I come because you showed truly, Rosaura. All as you say, came to pass as I saw it here on the surface of the water.

"There was the ship—*La Capitana*. I read even the name upon its bow. And there was Heredia himself walking its deck. There was also the sea . . . at first calm . . . then the wind . . . the sky all at once dark . . . waves . . . waves. It was a hurricane. *La Capitana* was caught in a hurricane. News of all this came to-day."

"But," jeers Rosaura; "but there is no news of your friend Heredia, eh? And so the great Saavedra comes again to poor Rosaura!"

"There is gold to pay for the news, Rosaura."

And the mighty male creature becomes a pleading and credulous child before a mulatto girl who calls herself a sorceress.

"There is gold to pay, Rosaura."

Rosaura laughs.

"It would be worth gold indeed—much gold—to Saavedra to know the fate of his friend Heredia, no? And why does Saavedra so—"

"So hate Heredia?" he snarls. "I hate because I hate, nor am I alone in hating. Why did Heredia leave the city he founded? Why has he gone to Spain to lay his case before the crown, if not because he sowed here the seeds which inevitably grow and blossom into hate?"

"There, I have answered your why with my because! *Por qué y porque, no?*"

Saavedra has drawn close to the earthen tub. He stands over it, a towering figure which breathes hard. The walls seem to give back emphasized and exaggerated the deep rolling r's of his Spanish, "*Por qué y porque, no?*"

As Rosaura confronts this Saavedra, the pale light of the lantern reveals her face, showing it tense and still with the smile gone out of it. Her heaving breast marks a sort of time; for the time of the outside world has ceased to be, and here in this black

chamber time is measured by the pulsation of Rosaura's heart.

For a space there is only this heart-beat of time. Then suddenly:

"Look," cries Rosaura. "Look at the water. Look. And don't stop looking. Look and look and look. . . ."

"There is nothing, Rosaura. There is only the water with the light of the lantern falling along it."

"Again look. Do you not now see a ship—a ship just where the light lies?"

"It is *La Capitana*!" Saavedra starts up.

"Quiet! Dare not break the thread of enchantment. Look!" Rosaura's voice sternly commands. "Look."

"It is the ship and it is night," Saavedra mutters, bending lower over the earthen tub.

And again in the still black room where lantern-light glints on water, only the pulsing of Rosaura's breast marks the passing time.

"It is night. And the wind blows the waves high. Once more *La Capitana* battles with a stormy sea. Will she this time conquer as before?" The voice now speaking does not seem to belong to Rosaura. The mocking girl has vanished, leaving in her place this monotonous chanting voice.

"It is night," the voice repeats, "night, and again





THE WAY INTO THE CITY

the wind blows the waves high. The waves toss the ship. It is furious now . . . the wind . . .

"Listen! I hear the creaking of the timbers as the waves dash and break against the sides of the boat."

"I, too, hear." Saavedra shudders.

"Dare not break the thread," Rosaura intones. "The timbers creak. . . . There is lightning. And I see . . . I see land. It is the coast of Spain!"

"The coast of Spain!" Saavedra's lungs seem to fight for air. "Yes, I also see. But what more—what more, Rosaura?"

"Now I don't see them any longer. The vision passes."

There is for a space only the rise and fall of her breast. And then the voice resumes.

"There is again the lightning. But something has happened. The ship is not the same. Look! It is the rudder. Yes, the rudder is missing. See, how the ship pitches wildly. The wind, the wind and the waves are now its captain. The wind . . . Let him who can . . . Let him who can save himself! . . ."

In the heat and terror of the room the sweat pours down Saavedra's swarthy face, now waxy pale.

"Look. Do not cease to look. . . . I see Heredia in the water. He fights. Now he is gone. . . . Now again on the very foam of the wave. Look. . . ."

"Ah, Rosaura!"



"Once more gone . . . quite gone. . . . Again, how he fights the sea! One more effort—one more and he is saved. There lies Spain, the coast of Spain. He cannot fail now. His feet touch the very earth.

"Look"; the voice booms like a far-off bell.

"Look . . . Look!"

"The earth of Spain, Rosaura."

"Look!" The voice tolls. "Do not break the thread of enchantment. Only look."

"There comes a vast rushing wave. God, what a wave! And where? Where, Rosaura, is Heredia?"

"Look!"

"It is dark. I no longer see. Tell me, Rosaura, where? I see nothing."

"There is nothing, Saavedra. Nothing. There is only the empty beach; waves pounding—beating in long lines on the beach. And the beach . . . the beach is empty."

So passes my vision of the legend. But I seem to hear a faint weary sigh, the tired sigh of creation. I seem to know that somewhere in the far-off past Rosaura's spirit lies spent and limp.

I pick up the little green volume where I first discovered the shade of Rosaura wandering among the legends and traditions of Cartagena. About it

clings still the faint musty odor of the tropics; the familiar odor of sheets and pillows and towels grown musty in the tropics.

And I read on the yellow-stained pages of the book a foot-note which states that on January 28, 1555, nearly a thousand miles in the inaccessible interior, in the lofty city of Bogotá, a paper was found fixed to the walls of the cathedral. The paper proclaimed that on the distant coast of Spain the sailing vessel *La Capitana* had been wrecked; giving the hour, the day, and the month, and further announcing that with the ship had perished all souls on board.

The old chronicler Rodríguez Fresle suggests that this news came to Bogotá through one Juana García, mother of that Rosaura of Cartagena who had upon the previous night shown to Saavedra these strange events clearly mirrored in an earthenware tub of water; events which months later were corroborated by the ships which came out from Spain.

It was this ancient Cartagena of Rosaura, Saavedra, and Heredia that I saw as we drove through the crooked painted streets on the bright July morning of our arrival.

And now looking back over those first days when I could not free myself from the drama of centuries long past, I find that Rosaura in her black room still

appears persistently before me. I visualize that old Cartagena, and there is always Rosaura with her mocking smile and her smoldering eyes.

"Very well, Rosaura. You shall make me see your city as you made Saavedra see the ship and Heredia fighting the sea."

And the shade of Rosaura is flattered and interested, for she had been proud of the profession of sorceress. Thus together we explore the thick dusk of vanished years.

I know what I want. I want to follow the life of a certain Jesuit priest, Pedro Claver, who captured my imagination from the moment I met him in the pages of a book of Cunninghame Graham's; but Claver had come to Cartagena just after Rosaura's day, and she can vivify only the life during her incarnation as sorceress of the sixteenth century. Thus I let her wander among her own fantastic shadows.

And among those shadows is Carón, the wizard who was her predecessor. I, too, am familiar with Carón, for his tradition still survives, passed from mouth to mouth and finally preserved in those legends which have been assembled by Delgado. Of course Rosaura knew nothing of Delgado. But she knew of Carón.

“If you will look upon the water, señora. If you will look as Saavedra looked, you will see old Carón.

“The cacique, his master, has sent for him. Because white men have come to Cartagena, the cacique is much troubled. These white men kill. They kill with lightning. They sit on moving monsters with four arms. These monsters cry out in a manner which makes the very skin of Indians creep. The chief of these white men is called Heredia. He is a being of terror and power, perhaps not of this earth. So the poor Indians thought of the white men. They did not know that Rosaura would one day show the very waves which were to sweep this Heredia to his doom. Thus filled with his fears, the cacique is troubled and has sent for Carón.

“Now you see Carón. He is passing through the streets. His face is stained with the juice of plants, and he is decked out with feathers. There are Indians at his side who play on instruments made of shells. He is very clear now on the face of the water. You can see the strange faces he makes as he comes. The faces of Carón must surely always be remembered in Cartagena. He cries out, too, and utters unknown words. The Indians are very frightened, for Carón is wise. Therefore the cacique desires him.

“But with all his wisdom, señora, Carón fails to read the future truly. He counsels war, not knowing that only the waves will conquer Heredia.

“Carón counsels war and the surface of my bowl is troubled, as the cacique was troubled. The water is no longer my clear mirror. So it is always when there is war in the air. The water is red and troubled. For the cacique battles against the white men. . . .

“Now a peace has been made. That I know from the sudden smoothness of the water.

“Look. Here Carón again enters. He will now amuse the cacique and Heredia and all their chiefs. First there is war. Then peace. Then always the lords of the war gather for entertainment. I see men digging in the patio a space so many rods by so many rods. While they dig, Carón stands before the chiefs. He is chewing live coals. He sends them forth again in a rain of stars. This he does with the snortings of a mad beast, but with no smallest sign of suffering. All that I show you here is true, señora; for my mother has often told me of it. I think that as a child she herself may even have seen it.

“Look where Heredia sits. He sits amazed. There were no such wizards in Spain. So Saavedra himself admitted to me.

“The men who dig now fill the space with coals. With huge fans Indians blow these coals. The embers burn red. And you can hear. . . . If you will listen well you can hear the shell instruments of Carón’s musicians. And there, plainly enough, is Carón bowing low to the cacique and to Heredia. Now he dances. He dances slowly across the red bed of the coals. He dances across and back again. He does not even hurry in his bare feet over the coals. Thus he dances slowly to the music of the shells. And at the end Heredia, nor any of his chiefs, can find an injury upon the feet of Carón! Ah, Carón was clever, though he could not look into the distance, nor read the future.

“And now appears a joke on the water, señora. See Heredia. He calls to him one of his soldiers. He commands him to take out his left eye; for Heredia would confront the cacique with some prodigious wonder. This soldier removes his eye, not once but many times, for as Heredia well knew his eye was of glass. Carón and the cacique are speechless. They meditate long.

“At last when the cacique and Heredia part, at the moment of embracing, you can hear that the cacique whispers in the ear of Heredia. He whispers, ‘Friend, thy wizard removed only the left eye!’

“How Saavedra would laugh, señora, when he told

that joke on Heredia! For Saavedra's hate died only with Saavedra!"

Thus the phantom of Rosaura quickens for me the quaint traditions which are partly history and partly legend; each significant because each is a bit of the pattern of that far-famed Cartagena of the Indies, to which the priest Claver had come early in the seventeenth century.

Among those legends is also the story of the enchanted hens.

After the many bloody battles in which the Spaniards were victorious, peace, as Rosaura said, had been made. Heredia then encouraged trade with the neighboring tribes by gifts of pigs, chickens, and cattle. And very cautiously the Indians were entering into commercial relations with their conquerors. So, little by little, the Spanish influence was extended into the surrounding districts, where, according to the old historians, gold was found to be "running in the dust," so that when any one had need of money, all that was necessary was to go out after a shower and scoop up the sand of the little ravines. There gold would always be found.

But Rosaura knew of a certain Rebolledo, a poor silver-smith from Cadiz, who did not have to go looking for gold. The gold came to him.

One day he bought a hen from an Indian who had paddled in with a canoe full of chickens, which, tied together by their legs, lay in the bottom of the canoe like a pile of damp feathers, but moving from time to time, as though the feathers covered something alive there in the bottom of the boat.

Rebolledo took his hen home. His son Cola plucked it, and his daughter Mina roasted it. At breakfast Mina cried out that she had broken a tooth in the gizzard of the chicken. But the pebble which had broken her tooth proved to be a nugget of gold—pure gold!

Rebolledo ran back to the dock to look for the canoe from which he had bought this hen. And in the gizzard of the second fowl was a nugget even larger than the first.

“Children!” he cried. “We shall eat chicken without cost! The whip to either of you who breathes a word!”

Back again he went to the dock, where he bought all the remaining hens.

“Your fowls, friend Indian,” he said, “are delicious. My daughter, Mina, has a shop for the sale of chicken meat. Bring us as many as you can.”

So it was that fortune sent gold to the lucky Rebolledo, although the secret, Rosaura declared, was not discovered until he had returned to Spain,



a rich man; but people ever after looked carefully in the gizzards of the chickens they ate.

I recall to Rosaura the fire of 1552, which occurred three years before the shipwreck which cost the Governor Heredia his life.

The story of the fire, Rosaura thinks, is really the story of a great love and a great jealousy.

Among the braves who had aided Heredia in the conquest there had been Don Luis Bravo. I must have heard of Don Luis? He was not only a "*bravo*" but a "discreet gentleman given to love-making." Those were the days when because of its vast wealth adventurers had flocked to Cartagena. There had even been women among them; Spanish women daring the long sea-voyage in the hope that in the Indies they might secure husbands and fortunes.

Most sly of them all had been Dorotea Zequeira whose caprice it was to call herself a widow, the widow of Soria. This Dorotea was so practised in the art of fascination that she even succeeded in captivating Don Luis Bravo himself; that is until one day, wandering on the outskirts of the town, his eyes fell bewitched upon the Indian girl Anica.

After that poor Don Luis could not eat nor sleep. He might even have gone so far as to sell his soul

to Satan, if he had not luckily happened to consult Celestina, a specialist in love attacks; and Celestina's skill was such that in the end the innocent Anica became the lover of the great Spanish gentleman, Don Luis.

There had been plenty to run with news of this to Dorotea, who, insane with jealousy, had employed a good-for-nothing Gipsy to brew her a drink, to be taken a few drops in water before going to bed.

But Don Luis continued to love Anica.

The Gipsy therefore made an appointment with Dorotea to come at midnight to her house and there to prepare a drug which would be infallible.

All this took place in the month of January, when the winds are high. Indeed so strongly did the wind blow the flames of the Gipsy's charcoal stove that the table on which it stood caught fire. And in a moment the garments which Dorotea wore were blazing, and in her terror she had rushed out of the house. She ran screaming through the streets, but the faster she ran the more the flames wrapped themselves around her. The Gipsy, too, called for aid, but because of the late hour the people rested after the weariness of the day, and they were slow to rouse. The house had stood at the north end of the city, so that the high strong wind drove the sparks and flames back over the neighboring houses.

“Ah-h!”

Rosaura's wraith becomes violently excited as she relives the scene of that fire.

“The flames run from thatch to thatch, señora. I see on the water the light of the flames. I hear the bells which at last sound the alarm. Now people jump from their beds. ‘A foe has set fire to the town.’ That is what all are saying. ‘The enemy is here.’

“They run distracted, not knowing whether to flee from the enemy or to fight the fire.

“The flames whirl. They leap high. The night is no longer dark. The flames run from housetop to housetop. They leave ashes behind them. The bells ring. And everywhere . . . everywhere the people cry out. And the flames run. There is much loss. Houses are gone. Corn and oil and wine. . . . Everything is destroyed. Cartagena in ashes because Dorotea could not win from Anica the love of Don Luis!

“All took place, señora, as I now show it to you. . . .

“The Gipsy woman was hanged at once by Heredia's order, as a warning and in memory of the sufferers. Also he commanded that from that day the houses of Cartagena should be of lime and stone, of brick and tile.”

“And Anica?”

“Oh, Anica gave birth to so beautiful a little daughter that Don Luis married her at once. Heredia, the governor, was groomsman at the wedding.”

Life was in those days so simple.

## CHAPTER II

### SLAVE OF THE SLAVES

**I**T was to the Cartagena of Rosaura's legends that three hundred years ago the young priest Claver came out from Spain, burning with the strange holy fire which from time to time in the ages has consumed some rare spirit.

"I, Pedro Claver," he had written, "swear to God Almighty, before the Virgin, His mother, in the presence of the Celestial Court and of those around me, to preserve forever poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Society of Jesus." And he had signed the vow, "Pedro Claver, slave of the slaves until death."

In a day when the fattest profits were reaped from groaning black cargo; when a human creature might be purchased for five dollars in Africa and sold in Cartagena for two hundred and fifty, Claver came out to the Indies to become the "slave of the slaves."

From fragmentary anecdotes of this long-dead priest I had begun to construct a forgotten Cartagena; a Cartagena of intimate human emotions, un-

described in books where dates and historical facts are stressed and where the details of fortifications are analyzed and diagramed.

I knew, for example, that it would be charming to walk upon the city walls at sunset and to look out at the ships in the bay, because Claver refused ever to walk upon those walls to gaze at ships in the lovely bay. Because this young priest thought he must not listen to the news from Spain, I realized how eagerly the exiles in that far-away little colony awaited news of home, news months old when it reached them, but treasured and discussed until the next ship brought fresher tidings. And I knew that in this distant Cartagena there was sometimes diversion, for Claver refused to hear "dialogues, even when they were good." I knew also that those plucky colonists suffered from mosquitoes, because it was written that Claver had thought it wrong to brush them from his hands or face.

But that I might further understand Colombia in the person of this priest who two hundred years after his death was made its saint, I would let the known facts of his life pass through my mind, moving out as far as possible all the familiar mental furniture and letting the stage set itself as the Cartagena of the days when the great walls were building; when every year ten thousand African slaves

entered the country by way of its harbor, and when a green cross marked the location of the Inquisition.

And in this excursion into seventeenth-century Colombia I would keep with me the friendly wraith of Rosaura, visualizing for her the story of Claver and fancying what would be her comments.

Rosaura, I begin, Rosaura, do you remember how the sun glitters on the bay of Cartagena?

It glitters, and a ship has come into the bay. There is no breeze, no life in the sails. Sweat pours from the men who row, for it is the hot hour of noon, and the sun glitters on the blue.

The shopkeepers have padlocked their doors while they sleep away the midday.

A priest is hurrying along the deserted streets. From time to time he stops to knock on one of the closed doors. He is begging.

"A slave-ship enters the harbor," he is saying. "And we must speak to them with our hands before we can speak with our lips."

And men rise and unlock their doors, for it is lucky to give to a priest. Refusal might invite disaster.

So Claver hurries in the heat from door to door.

And I confide to Rosaura how strange I find it that a man who understands the importance of

“speaking with the hands” should be able to tolerate slavery itself.

While Rosaura murmurs something about white men always having had slaves, my thought rushes forward to the year 1924, finding there statesmen gravely formulating laws for the humane conduct of warfare, while brave men and women dare death to bring help to battle-fields where civilization has at vast expense killed and mutilated itself.

After this forward look it is possible to move less critically in the seventeenth century; no longer exclaiming, How can this or that have been? no longer surprised at Claver as he hurries to the slave-ship with gifts of food and medicine, fearlessly descending when the hatches are lifted, descending into the hold of a slave-ship where there is horror, stench and disease, death and terror.

Claver hurries down into the hold. The voyage has been long by sail from Africa. Children have been born in the black heat of the hold. And many—old and young—have died. Birth and death have taken place without care. The sailors, fearing plague and smallpox, have opened the hatch only long enough to supply food and water to their human cargo. And to the suffering of that hold has been added the black terror of the savage mind.

Day and night they moan that at the end of the



voyage they are to be killed—all killed, and their bones ground to make the white man's gunpowder.

And now the ship no longer moves. The hatch is opened.

Do they come at last to kill for the gunpowder? . . . The light blinds. . . . Who comes?

A man in a long black robe comes. There are men with him; negro men who speak what the man in the gown is saying.

He is offering food. For the ill there is medicine. And all the time through the negro men he is speaking of love and of some one called God. It is this God who is represented as loving them so much.

Love! They must have known love simply as animals know it—that, plus the indefinable something which is inseparable from the human ability to remember the past and to look forward to the future.

God . . . loving them! What are they to make of such words? But the man who speaks to them gives food and cares for the sick. It begins almost to look as though perhaps their bones were not after all to make gunpowder!

If not . . . if not, it will be good to walk again on land under the sky, to sit basking in the sun, and to look upon palm-trees.

The man in the robe is saying that some one—they are not sure who—but some one loves them.

They dimly, slowly, visualize love. . . . Some one, he says, loves them, and it is all a lie about the gunpowder.

It will then be good to walk—to walk again on land under the sky.

The old writers say that such was Claver's immediate influence over these newly arrived slaves that they would follow him on shore; going "quite peaceably and gently, like sheep." And Pedro Claver? What were his sensations? Did he never turn to look at his black flock, uneasy, remorseful, filled with foreboding and with deep despair?

The chroniclers continue, without comment of horror or surprise, that whenever there was a lull in the slave traffic Pedro Claver would exclaim bitterly, "Ah, who would not see himself on the coasts of Guinea, of Carabal, and of Arda, converting the souls of the poor negroes!"

I had marveled that a man who wrote himself down "the slave of the slaves forever" could endure the hideous fact of slavery. And here I was forced to see tears of frustration in Claver's eyes when no ship brought him negroes to convert; forced slowly to recognize that for all those forty years of his life in Cartagena he had rejoiced in the opportunity which the slave traffic offered him. The horror of

it I felt he brushed aside as after all a small price to pay for the eternal salvation of one's soul. In the salvation of the enslaved he must have believed slavery was justified. And to this arduous task of redemption he untiringly gave himself.

The mists were lifting for me about the psychology of the saint Pedro Claver.

But I am forgetting Rosaura. Psychology does not interest her. She waits for me to go on with the story.

Into the familiar patio of Claver's convent I therefore proceed to picture for myself and for Rosaura Claver's conversion of the slaves.

The patio is quiet and sunny. On three sides the arched and galleried convent shuts out the world, and on the fourth side stands the church. The patio is quite still save for perhaps a faint drone of priests at mass. There, Claver has his negroes assemble, arranged in groups according to the dialect they speak. And when all are admitted and the great door of the convent closed, Claver will enter carrying the crucifix.

Meanwhile the slaves sit in the sun, and interpreters go about asking each one whether he has been baptized; each must be questioned privately, since, if the question were put and answered aloud,





ANCIENT WALLS OF CARTAGENA

all would respond as the first, regardless of the fact. For how can the subject of baptism penetrate the contentment of slaves sitting in the sun?

The question is asked. Well, answer it, yes or no, and let the man pass on. What does the answer matter? When one sits at rest in the sun!

But their dreamy attention is captured when Claver takes his place in the middle of the patio. Claver they remember is their friend, for he came into the hold of the ship with gifts and with comfort. He is ordering them now to do as they see him do.

This the interpreters repeat to each group.

Claver then puts his hands to his forehead, saying distinctly and very slowly, "For the sign of the Holy Cross."

The negroes obediently place their hands upon their foreheads.

Again the words so slowly and carefully. This time Claver's hand makes the sign. Once more, and now uncertainly the negroes imitate the sign.

Passing then among them Claver has each separately go through the ceremony: over and over, many weary times over, until the lesson is at last perfectly learned, until with the words each clumsy black hand performs the sign.

Group by group is now instructed in the articles

of faith and the commandments. Shadows lengthen under the arches, and the negroes doze and nod under the influence of those articles of faith.

When the lesson is over Claver once more takes his place in the center of the patio. He is holding the cross high, and he is chanting:

“Jesucristo, Son of God. Thou art my father and my mother and all my good. I love Thee much. My soul is heavy at having offended Thee. Señor, I love Thee, much . . . much . . . much.”

This the interpreters translate; the negroes repeating after them, each as well as he is able, “I love Thee much, much . . . Señor . . . my soul is heavy. . . .”

Day after day these slaves are brought to the patio, and day after day Claver goes patiently over the lesson: the sign of the cross, the commandments, the articles of faith and the principal prayers of the church; the sign of the cross; all countless times repeated.

When at last he is satisfied that each is well instructed he puts the question: “Do you wish to become Christians and to go to the sky to enjoy God?”

Here in the patio an altar is then set up, and arrangements for baptism proceed at once. Claver waits before the altar, as he must often have waited,

for it is said that in his forty years of service he baptized four hundred thousand negroes.

He stands radiant, and the glory of that salvation which he felt himself to bring to the slaves must have erased from his mind all memory of the pestilence and anguish of slave-ships, and all consciousness of the walls building around the city, building just outside his own convent, building by the toil of negro slaves working under the lash. Standing waiting to perfect the conversion of new souls, Claver forgets all.

The negroes sit very still. They are looking at a painting on canvas which has been unrolled before them.

The picture represents Christ upon the cross. The blood which drips from his wounds is caught in a great receptacle. A priest has filled a shell with the holy blood. He is pouring it over the heads of the converts. Surrounding this scene are the figures of the pope, the cardinals, bishops, kings, and warriors, "authorizing by their presence the act of baptism."

In the lower part of the picture there appear on one side "negroes, clean, seated and happy. . . . They are the baptized negroes." On the other side are "filthy and evil-smelling negroes, in the midst



of flames which are about to destroy them. . . . They are the negroes who refuse baptism."

Rosaura agrees with my chronicler that after gazing upon this picture it is natural that the negroes should have eagerly crowded forward for baptism. And she is interested in the new names which they receive with their baptism, and approves of the labor-saving device of allotting them by groups; every group of ten negroes thus receiving the same name, which they are made to repeat many times, and urged to say frequently to one another that they may not forget. She approves also of the medals which are finally hung about each neck, medals which "served to distinguish those negroes which had been regenerated in Christ."

And when the last medal has been hung about the last converted neck, Claver stands triumphant before the altar under the open sky of the patio.

## CHAPTER III

### GREEN CANDLES IN THE DAWN

**I**N our first days in Cartagena, when my mind so persistently haunted the past, I found myself often in the little palmy square on which the House of the Inquisition fronts.

I used to sit in this park and watch the shadows on the white façade; shadows of the palms in the park and shadows of passing people. I knew that under that building of gracious dignity were once torture-chambers and dungeons.

How had it been possible? How had men permitted it, decreed it; men removed from us by only three hundred years?

In Cartagena, watching the shadows quiver, I knew that I must understand the Inquisition. Nothing, I felt—not even human greed with its far consequences—can be swept aside with summary condemnation, without an attempt to understand causes.

Thus the Inquisition cannot be dismissed with a shudder of disgust. Protestants cannot deposit the blame on the door-step of Catholicism and go away; for Protestants burned their witches.

No, I would repeat to myself, as I went about Cartagena, no, I must understand the Inquisition.

I was not puzzled at the part which lust for power had played. That was simple. The thing which baffled me was that the Inquisition could have been countenanced by good and sincere men.

So I used to sit and wonder, watching the shadows; wondering, of course, chiefly about Pedro Claver. During his years in Cartagena the Inquisition had been at the height of its power. How could this gentle priest who with his own hands cared tenderly for negro slaves, scorning to fear leprosy or small-pox or fever; how could he whose life was wholly given to the lowest and the most wretched; how could he have endured the horror of burning and scourging and torture?

And now looking back still perplexed, I turn to my phantom companion.

"There, Rosaura, in that quiet little park the Inquisition used to preside over the Auto de Fe! And how could Claver ever have been part of that horrible pageant?"

But Rosaura is not concerned with Claver. She is asking what I mean by the Inquisition and what was the Auto de Fe. And I realize that the Holy Tribunal was established after her death.

The Inquisition—I cannot explain it to Rosaura

unless I force myself to look upon it; and if I am to picture those days when anything was possible, I can no longer shudder away from the Inquisition.

It was the year 1614; and in the quiet square where I so often sat and wondered, there were then gathered the high dignitaries of the church, the officers of the Holy Inquisition, and fifty of the principal citizens who in their most gala garments were mounted on spirited horses. In imposing formation this company left the park, marching forward to the sound of trumpets, flageolets, and kettle-drums. They passed thus through the streets, making everywhere announcement of the *Auto de Fe*, to be held for "the greater purification of the Faith."

And I know what must have been the effect in that Cartagena where dialogues were the diversion and the news from Spain came at long intervals over the treacherous sea! I know because the great dark eyes of Rosaura widen before the spectacle which I picture. "So marched old Carón, the wizard," she cries. "He marched to the music which his Indians made upon shells. And he danced. Will these men dance, too?"

"No, Rosaura. . . . This is what happened there in the park."

They set up a stand and roofed all the square with the sails of ships. For days before the great occasion armed men patrolled the streets on foot and on horseback; the guard on the forts was doubled, artillery was placed at the entrance of all streets leading to the park, and there soldiers guarded the Tribunal. Cartagena had never seen such preparations.

At dawn on the day before the Auto de Fe, all was at last ready, and the moment had come to raise the standard of the Faith. There was music. Guns saluted. The ministers of the Holy Office appeared carrying their banner. There was clamor of fifes and of drums and of trumpets. And again there were the guns.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of that same day the procession of the cross proceeded in solemn splendor through the city. It passed in pomp led by eight noblemen on horses, and it passed along streets gay with the flutter and color of flags, and thronged with the eager, curious population.

The procession wound slowly back to the park, and the crowd herded after it. There, with impressive ritual, the cross was placed upon an altar in the stand prepared for the penitents, and throughout the night Dominican monks kept candles burning before it, while soldiers ceaselessly patrolled the streets. And who could have slept in the tense ex-

pectancy of that night before the celebration of the first Auto de Fe?

The day broke. Dungeons were opened and penitents taken from their cells to be decked in the strange gear decreed by the Tribunal, and then conducted in ceremonious silent procession through the streets. They marched carrying green candles—the symbolic color of the Inquisition was green—and as they marched they seemed from time to time to stumble as though the mere weight of their feet were too great a burden.

My story pauses while I contemplate the spectacle.

“Green candles in the dawn, Rosaura. Shadows of speechless victims . . . moving with slow effort in wretched procession; moving magnified on the walls of the houses which hem in the narrow streets. Green candles in the dawn. Shadow candles on the walls. Profound silence, heavy with pain.”

“See, señora! They have been tortured; tortured to make them confess.”

“How do you know, Rosaura?”

“By their faces. There is a look. After torture there remains a look. I have seen it on Indians tortured to tell where gold is hidden. Oh, I know well the look!”

But the story must go on, for upon that morning the “holy officers” passed also in parade; follow-

ing the same streets along which had dragged that guarded file of "penitents" bearing the green candles which had flickered unsteadily, as though the hands that held them trembled.

Thus they marched, back to the little square where all took the seats prepared for them in the stands; the two Inquisitors upon the dais; on the right and left the highest officials of the church and of the Tribunal; behind them the priors of the monasteries; and behind them the captains of the garrisons. The prosecutor occupied a crimson velvet chair opposite the dais, and on his left was the secretary with his writing-table.

When all were placed, the prior of Santo Domingo sang the mass, and a priest of the order of San Agustín delivered a sermon. The penitents listened, poor victims growing perhaps mercifully numb as the minutes crawled, becoming slowly indifferent to fate, waiting less anxiously for the final sentence.

When at last the reading of the accusations began, it was after nine o'clock. And so detailed and so lengthy were those accusations that although they were read from two pulpits by four readers, night had come before all were finished.

It was one of the longest days of the world, for a day is a variable matter. There are days which are evanescent moments, shiny moments; and there

are days so long and so racked with pain that at sunset may come old age. Among those long days was that of the first Auto de Fe in Cartagena.

At that time it is said there was no public clock in the city, the hours being announced by soldiers ringing a bell in the streets. And as the soldiers were irregular, so were the hours.

Upon the occasion of an Auto de Fe, the soldiers must have omitted altogether their uncertain ringing of the hours, so that only anguish could have marked the slow creep of time; while everlastingly the voices of the readers, mechanically ground out those interminable accusations of crime; the measured beat of sonorous Spanish syllables falling ponderously until, at last, night was descending.

Still they read. They read thus:

"Francisco Rodrigues Cabral, Portuguese; for having declared that in repeating the creed he had been taught to say 'resurrected the dead' instead of 'resurrected from among the dead,' and for praying thus as he had been taught, a punishment of two hundred lashes and perpetual banishment from the Indies.

"Antonio Bañon and Juana de Aranda, negro slaves; for blasphemy, one hundred lashes each——

"Blas de Manjarres, mulatto tailor, for exclaiming, 'Blessed be the Devil!'—lashes and exile."

And so forth and so forth and so forth. They were reading now by the light of torches.

"Luis Andrea, mulatto, for the relating of marvelous tales——

"Maria Ramirez, a sorceress, for the telling of fortunes in the water, with the rosary and by the palms, two hundred lashes and exile."



On and on, the throbbing syllables falling upon tired, hopeless hearts. I seem to hear them fall, to see the flaring tapers and to feel the night breeze blowing from the sea, as sweet and cool as though no monotonous voices chanted sentences of lashes and imprisonment, slavery at the galleys and exile . . . lashes. . . .

The words cut like whips. They make me know that Rosaura spoke truth. The torture, so incredible that it seems only to have existed in yellowed and musty pages, was a reality. It had been so dark a thing that it was seldom read from public pulpits. Flogging and exile, imprisonment, even burning in that open place outside the city which had come to be known as the "place of burning," all these were with prodigious solemnity declared from pulpits; but the torture which left a "look," that was a thing of dungeons in whose blackness stood instruments of horror, from which those who knew them never wholly recovered.

"But," interrupts Rosaura in a trembling whisper. "But señora; María Ramírez . . . was there no one to save her? Once my mother was condemned, condemned you know, to be burned. It happened in Bogotá. But there were rich men to save her. She had shown them wonderful things on

the water. And they saved her. Had this poor little María no one, señora?"

"The books speak of no one, Rosaura. I have given you the facts as Saldanha gives them. He says only that upon the following day the sentences were executed in the plaza. . . ."

Rosaura remains dumb, a shrinking terrified wraith. And I, too, am still; still with a horror which is warm and thick like blood.

I have looked upon the Inquisition, but I do not yet understand.

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felt to be authentic, since there was thus no doubt that he walked and talked with the very angels.

These things my mind recounts to Rosaura, going sick-heartedly over the facts, thinking of how year by year the alert figure of the young Claver had aged and wasted, and of how deep in their hollow sockets the light of his great eyes had at last burned, burning always more dimly as though seen far off, through mist.

In thinking of those nights which were multiplied by forty years, I forget to fancy the comments of Rosaura until suddenly the words come to me, "The priest's God must have been pleased."

The priest's God must have been pleased!

I understand all at once, in a flash of comprehension, how Claver had endured the shocking spectacle of the Inquisition. In pleasing God nothing, of course, was too much or too terrible. None, he would argue, could be spared. In the toil of day or the pain of night he did not spare himself.

I begin at last to understand.

The explanation of that ghastly Inquisition I see lies in the kind of God which man had made for himself, in the image which he had molded and set upon an altar.

In that Cartagena of the sixteenth and seven-



THE HOUSE OF THE INQUISITION



teenth centuries there was assembled the superstition of Europe, of Africa, and of America. Rosaura and her adventures were realities. Satan was everywhere. Even Claver was said often to use his scourge to drive him from his cell. Everybody believed in everything.

Spain believed not only in her own miracles but in the miracles of Africa and of this newly discovered America, with the difference that her miracles were holy and of God, while theirs she condemned and feared as the vile and dangerous work of Satan. As for America and Africa, they believed so much that inevitably they easily credited the miracles of priests and of images. Anything was possible.

The poor fogged brain of man was as in a black tunnel groping its way toward the distant patch of light which is its exit. And we in three hundred years have come so far and so fast that when I retrace our steps back to Claver and to the Inquisition I am mute before the pity of that dark time when man in all sincerity fashioned for himself a cruel God and then sought to propitiate him.

Claver had emphasized love. With that message he had gone down into the foul hold of slave-ships. Yet he had thought to please God by self-administered pain.

Looking back upon the clouded brain of that mankind only three hundred years younger than ourselves, I see the piteous efforts to believe in love, the struggle to convince itself. It was so much easier to follow the trail of tradition, so hard not to fear the evil mischief of Satan, the pranks of demons and the wrath of God.

Love was on the lips, but fear still gripped the heart. Fear . . . In that age of superlative physical courage when man dared all things in the visible world, bold and confident and strong, with his hand quick to draw the sword, before the unseen he trembled full of fear; he cowered before the supernatural. He felt all about him a crowding and invisible population, against which his might was of no avail. And he feared—he feared all that he could not see. He feared witchcraft and sorcery, demons and spirits. He saw them materially manifested everywhere, in snakes or in goats, in rocks and trees. They spoke to him in thunder. They controlled the sea. They punished with pestilence. And he feared. He feared greatly.

But man had his God. In his infinite need he turned to that God. He talked of the love for which his heart yearned, but he could not banish the shadow of his dread. He would therefore devise propitiations. He would be good. He would keep

himself pure. He would confess, and he would repeat endless prayers and burn candles, countless candles. Yet still he feared.

He would fast and scourge himself. He would punish all who doubted or offended his God.

So at last he hoped to win safety and glory, not here, but in the life to come.

During the first days of September, 1654, Claver was waiting to enter into that long-hoped-for glory.

In August he had said to his friend, Nicolás González, "I think it will come on one of the *fiestas* of the Holy Virgin."

"And with what a harvest of souls you go, padre!"

"Ah, no! No, I have lost all. Through impatience with this illness I have lost all."

The illness of which Claver spoke with deep tears of remorse had been to him four years of living death. Paralysis of the hands and feet had made him helpless. His body had been shaken with nervous tremblings. He had suffered much pain, and with it all had come persistent and bitter melancholy.

He had contracted this mortal disease in nursing a plague which had fallen upon the city. And now in his profound depression he fancied that it was his sins which had brought the pest to Cartagena.



In those four years he had known no rest. He had had himself carried in the arms of negro slaves from death-bed to death-bed, that he might console the dying, and never had he abandoned the punishment of his body.

But now when he saw how soon it would all be over, his drawn face began to take on an astonishing radiance.

"Brother Nicolás," he called feebly as he passed the sacristy, borne for the last time from prayer in the church to the cell where he was to die. "Brother Nicolás, I am dying. Is there anything I can do for you in the other life?"

"Only that you commend to God, me, this city, and this house."

Later Nicolás came with a list of many persons who wished Claver's personal intercession above.

"Will you sign here, padre," said Nicolás. "We want your signature that you will carry these names to God."

"Here? . . . It would be better, Nicolás, that I sign further down. You may want to add other names."

With an unquestioning assurance Claver thus signed, pledging himself to execute commissions in heaven.

And then he slipped from consciousness to uncon-

sciousness, from pain to peace; that soft slipping which is so often the last earthly sensation.

In that flickering border-land where consciousness dims, fleeting bits of thought come and go. As Claver's consciousness slowly faded, fragments of memory must have passed.

There was the list, his last earthly obligation, the names of those for whom he had undertaken to intercede—the list without doubt passed across the veiled film of his brain. And with it there was of course Nicolás who had requested, "Commend to God, me, this city, and this house."

Further and further away, fainter and fainter this list became, as a figure walking down a long black corridor passes from sight. So, too, Nicolás wandered off into littleness and nothingness, leaving behind him the echo of his, "Here, padre, this is where you sign—"

What was that about a list and signing? He must sign . . . but his fingers would not move. Queer. They were stone fingers. Yet he seemed to be writing. He could even see what he had written. He saw the words, "slave of the slaves until death."

The writing then faded. Everything faded. Soon no one could read it. What a pity—that it should not be read! . . .

"But it will be," a voice infinitely far off was

whispering. "It will be. They will read it when . . . when you are seated . . . on the throne. . . . Pedro, most dear brother of my life."

Some one was calling him Pedro. Why had the other some one said "padre"? Pedro! Yes, of course, that was his name. He was young Pedro, serving his novitiate at Mallorca in Spain. And it was Alonso, the old doorkeeper, who spoke; Alonso who all day tended the door and all day told his beads.

What was Alonso saying so far away? . . . He was speaking to him. He was saying? . . . "Pedro . . . most dear brother of my life . . . I have seen . . . in a vision . . ."

The voice trailed off and disappeared down a dark passage just as the other voice had done.

Was it a list that Alonso had seen? And was he about to say, "Padre, here you sign"? Some one had said that. . . . Who?

Not Alonso, for there was now no list; and he, Pedro Claver, was not yet a padre. He was young and still under his probation.

But where was the strength of youth? Why was he so utterly weak? Strange! He did not remember ever to have felt thus weak.

Now the voice had returned, the voice of Alonso

who all day muttered over his beads and at night saw visions. Alonso's voice was speaking:

"Pedro, in a vision I saw a throne which was empty. 'For whom is this throne?' I asked, and thus was I answered: 'It is prepared for thy disciple, Claver, as a reward for the souls which he will win for God in the Indies.'"

Ah, he had heard those words . . . many times . . . long ago in Mallorca. . . .

But now, as he slipped deeper and further, all was dark, and where were the words in the dark? Dear familiar words. Let them . . . not go . . . Dear words, faint and far. . . . "When . . . When you are seated . . . on your throne . . . prepared in reward . . . Pedro . . . brother . . ."

These things must have passed, for of such were the memories of his life.

And then there were children crying in the street outside, but Claver did not hear them. They were crying: "The saint is dying! The saint is dying!"

But Claver did not hear. He did not even know that it was the birthday of the Virgin.

The news spread. Negroes hurried, mourning as they ran. They would kiss for the last time the hand that had been to them as the hand of a father. From all directions rich and poor, white and black, all

hastened, mourning. They forced the doors which the priests had closed. They crowded about the bed.

But Claver did not feel their tears. Moment by moment he was gently slipping away.

The throng came again to the church, surrounding his coffin. In pressing about it, they looked upon Death. And all at once fear possessed them, that strange blind credulous fear of three hundred years ago.

It flared in them like a sudden flame. They pressed closer, closer. They must have help for their fear. Like flame their fear fed upon itself. They felt the air vibrate with a terror which beat upon them like wings. They must have help. They pressed in hot panic about the coffin.

In the church there was peace only in the still face of Claver, from which death had magically smoothed all trace of pain.

But the panting, pressing mourners had forgotten the pale sweet majesty of his face. They feared, and in their fear they snatched the brocaded vestment which covered Claver. They tore it into shreds, for the smallest scrap would be a talisman to ward off evils. It might even work miracles. Anything was possible.

To protect the very corpse itself, the priests

brought out the pillow upon which Claver had died. Every hair of it was priceless, and those who had not secured a scrap of the vestment were determined to possess a hair of the pillow. In order further to appease the mob, the sacristan mounted the pulpit, from which he distributed great numbers of seals, which Claver had had made to present to those whom he confessed.

And while the throng surged about the pulpit Claver's coffin was slid into the niche which awaited it.

In that wraith of a throng fighting for ghostly seals of confession, distributed by a phantom sacristan, I left my sorceress friend Rosaura. She was eagerly mingling with the unearthly mob, for Rosaura, too, believed in charms and would obtain a talisman against ills.

I had succeeded in bringing Rosaura over with me into the seventeenth century, but I knew I could carry her no further. I was moving on through the march of time, and she could not follow.

I had shown her Colombia's saint, but she would never comprehend its Liberator. Her mind would never grasp the freeing of slaves. Nor could I ever make her see the ships which were to steam into the blue sparkle of the bay, dwarfing the empty forts of the Boca Chica.

Thus I left her. I would miss her bracelets and her smile. Also I would miss her comments, for I had liked seeing through sorceress eyes which were four hundred years younger than my own. I was sorry, but so intent was Rosaura in the struggle to secure a new and potent charm that she did not even see that I was going.

## CHAPTER V

### SACRED REMAINS

THE doorkeeper left us waiting in the reception-room while he pattered off in search of the padre to whom we had a letter of introduction. And if you have ever waited in the reception-room of any Spanish-American convent or monastery, you have waited in them all; for there will always be the same bare floor, the same high ceiling and white walls. Always straight hard wooden chairs will be set stiffly about; and always the great whitewashed wall spaces will be broken by occasional holy pictures; sometimes a dark old painting, age-dimmed; sometimes a chromo of crude blatant color; both types often being found side by side, as though the subject rather than the execution were the important thing.

And in such a room you will always be kept waiting while some doorkeeper with clinking rosary and soft-shod feet goes off with your card, disappearing into what seems a limitless realm of quiet, while you are left to wait, and, waiting, lose all sense of time. . . .



It was not until later that I realized how this visit to the church and to the cloisters of San Pedro Claver was to bridge the distance between those long-past days of the sorceress and the present moment in the year 1924 of our transient existence; the visit, as it were, forming a half-way house where we might pause for breath, breaking the past-to-present journey, and arriving quite easily at to-day.

But this I did not yet comprehend as, waiting, I gazed dreamily through the big wide doorway, through the arched corridor, and out into the patio, where the priest, Claver, had with so tireless a patience taught slaves to make the sign of the cross and to repeat many times over the words, "I love Thee, much . . . much . . . much"; where, too, in the night he had run with thorns about his temples and a cross on his back, scourging himself as he implored pardon for his sins.

Waiting for the padre, to whom we had a letter, I looked out upon this patio, in which the long languid leaves of a banana-plant drooped green against an old gray wall. They were motionless leaves, and even the sharply contrasting spots of light and shadow which lay under the arches and upon the walls, they, too, were still. Only the high-raised head of a palm gently rustled.

And then all at once the padre had come. One

minute we had been vaguely waiting, and the next minute he was there; a little breathless, as though he had come a long way—spiritually and emotionally, perhaps, a long way. He had possibly been discovered in the isolation of his devotions and thus had had to bring himself back with effort to visitors waiting in the reception-room.

The padre was black-robed, with a little square black hat topped by a rosette of silk fringe, and he had the slightly hollow-chested look which the tightly buttoned Jesuit gown gives to a slender man; while the feet protruding from beneath his robe seemed, like all priests' feet, extraordinarily large and masculine in contradiction to their skirts.

The padre entered with just that hint of flurry and in his hands was the letter in which we were recommended to his attention.

"My friend writes," he said interrogatively, "that the señora is especially interested in our saint, Pedro Claver?"

Yes, I was interested. Even in Spanish I could be fluent if the subject were Claver. I was interested. In a shop in Cartagena I had found the padre's life of Claver. I wanted to talk about it . . . and to see the church.

And immediately the look of having come a long way left the padre; for we met upon a plane where

it was his habit to live. He became eager, his speech rapid.

So I had read his book! It was a pity that I had bought it. He would have been happy to present it to me. But he had photographs . . . of immense interest, and a little book of prayers to the saint. They were mine.

And he spread out on the center-table photographs of Cartagena and photographs of old paintings taken from portraits, of Alonso through whose visions Claver three hundred years ago had been influenced to dedicate his life to the slaves of Colombia, and photographs from paintings of Claver himself—Claver at the dock receiving the slaves, and Claver catechizing his converts. There were photographs also of his room, of the view from his window, and of the church in which he had worshiped. The padre had been for years collecting them. He laid them before us, as one who shares precious treasures, confident of sympathy.

“And now”—rising as he spoke—“if you will come—”

We followed him up the short wide flight of stairs on the left of the reception-room, mounting to the room which opens off the landing, the room so long ago chosen by Claver because there the doorkeeper could easily summon him.

And as we went, the padre talked all the time, very fast, as though he did not often have new listeners.

“This, *mi señora*, is the room. Here, two hundred and sixty-nine years ago, took place the most precious death of our saint.”

We looked about us, at whitewashed walls, at the altar which had been erected at one end of the room, and over to the side where two small windows faced the bay.

“He watched always for the slave-ships,” the Padre was saying. “From these windows he could see them far off, so that he had time to beg gifts with which to greet the slaves.”

The bay lay blue and lovely like a jewel in the sun, catching the light and giving it back in a myriad sparkles. All that was ugly in the past seemed an impossible nightmare in the azure peace of the present.

But the padre was still speaking. He was saying that for long the location of Claver’s room had been lost—forgotten. The Jesuits had been expelled from Spain and from all her colonies, as, of course, I must know. This had happened more than a hundred years ago. “A sad, sad time, *señora*. Our religious house passed then into the hands of the monks of San Juan de Diós, and, later, from the possession of the king into the control of the republic.

“During the Revolution the church was used as a barracks, as an armory, even as a public market.

“Imagine for yourself, señora, here in these holy places, the profanation; the speech of shame taking the place of prayer and sacred ceremony. *Imagínese, mi señora!*”

“But, after all, padre, it was the Revolution that started the movement to free Claver’s slaves.”

“Yes, for God is great. We need only patience . . . only patience.

“Meanwhile, through the years, the remains of our Claver lay silent in their niche in one of the columns; silent, but not altogether neglected—*gracias á Dios!* For at the foot of the column, they tell us, was placed a little table upon which a tiny oil-lamp never ceased to burn, fed and tended by the old negress Concepción.

“Every day she would come to the church, enter quietly, and, ignoring the vulgar jokes of the soldiers, she would replenish the oil in the lamp. And then, after praying for a moment before the tomb of her apostle, she would go away, to return on the following day.

“As for the soldiers, they did not destroy her lamp. They found it useful for lighting their pipes.

“So was the tomb remembered, although in the





THE PATIO OF SAN PEDRO CLAVER

confusion the very identity of Claver's room was forgotten.

"Nevertheless, the friends of Claver were all this time busy. Fifteen years after his death the city of Cartagena appealed to the Holy See, begging his canonization. Seventy-eight years later, upon established proof of his virtues in heroic degree, Pope Benedict XIV approved this appeal.

"Passed then, señora, one hundred years more; but is not God great? After confirmation of four miracles of the third order, performed by Claver in Cartagena, Pope Pius IX numbered him among the blessed.

"But there yet remained to prove two miracles wrought by his relics; and these two miracles, señora, were performed in your own United States; one in a city which you call *San Luis*, no? And the other in Milwaukee.

"So two hundred and thirty-three years after his death—years of many petitions to the Vatican—all conditions had been met, and under Leo XIII Claver was at last placed among the saints."

I was about to express amazement that it should require so much propaganda to make a saint a saint; but again, lit with that profound inner enthusiasm, the padre was speaking:



“And upon the same day, Alonso also was added to the saints!”

It was wonderful to him that Alonso and Claver, who had been so inseparable in the long past days, far away in Mallorca, should upon the same day have been united in the pomp and majesty of sainthood.

And his voice trembled deep with feeling: “Now—now our Claver is *San Pedro Claver!*”

He had much to tell of the gorgeous celebrations in honor of the new saint, Claver. And we were to “imagine for ourselves” the great cost and labor of restoring the Jesuit church in Cartagena, now renamed in honor of Claver. We were to imagine the filth and refuse which lay foot-deep upon its floor and the blasphemous inscriptions scrawled upon its walls.

But there had come, he said, “two men, chosen of God to restore this temple”—Bishops of Cartagena sent out from Italy, the second taking up the work where the first had laid it down.

“Marvelous and unexpected were the ways of the All-Powerful!”

Pedro was thus now canonized and his church restored, but that was still not enough. There remained the renovation of the ancient residence of the

Jesuits adjoining the church, a residence for forty years "perfumed by the heroic virtues" of Claver.

"This accomplished, it was presented to us, the Jesuits, and after a hundred years of banishment we returned once more to our house and to our church!"

Again he would have me "imagine for myself," giving me a pause before he continued:

"Understanding our troubled history, you see how it came about that the knowledge of Claver's little room was lost in the passing of those disastrous years." Forgotten for a space only, to be one day miraculously discovered through the finding of a stone slab upon which was cut out the inscription, "In this room died the venerable P. Pedro Claver, the 8th day of September, 1654." The slab had fitted exactly into a vacant niche in the wall outside the door of a small room on the first landing as the stairs mount.

"Convenient for the *portero*, and looking over the bay up which slave-ships once sailed, this room corroborated all the fragmentary facts handed down."

Its discovery, the padre added, had been made in the year 1917, the very year when the Holy See had increased the honors of Claver by naming him Patron of the Republic. And this title the padre felt had been so pleasing to Claver that as a sign of his gratification he had made known, through the

finding of the slab, which was the room sanctified by his virtues and glorified by his death.

And as he spoke I gradually realized that all this made up the drama of the padre's life.

He had perhaps an infrequent memory, warm but rarely recalled, of his childhood in the interior city of Medellin. This I inferred because, in discussing our itinerary, he had said with an affectionate detachment, "I hope you will go to Medellin, for that is my city."

But he had passed on at once to further talk of Claver.

The padre would, I reflected, have known Medellin in the days before the railroad, when the plaza was full of mules, arriving and departing caravans. The life and stir must have fascinated a small boy, for a plaza crowded with incoming and outgoing caravans of mules can never be anything but a place of delightful commotion; such are the endless possibilities of mules.

But this childhood had soon been put away to make room for the priestly education, to walk up and down under the purple flowering trees of the university, studying aloud, pacing under the trees.

And then had come the great enthusiasm, the devotion to Pedro Claver, which was revealed in his

eager gestures, his hurrying sentences, and in his lighted eyes.

In us all, dramas are going on more or less hidden behind the mask of faces, secret thrilling dramas whose unfolding is our life and whose dénouement is our death.

It is rare that an individual human drama becomes so impersonal that it lies outside one's self. Yet this padre lived in the life of a long-dead saint, living so without self-consciousness that all his drama could be poured into the ears of strangers, with a freedom from restraint sufficiently complete to give the impression that no smallest thing was held back, that this was truly the drama, and that there was nothing else.

An impersonality thus entire is bewildering. Is it something, I wondered, which is destroyed by modernity? My mind ran over the people whose lives I knew to some extent intimately. Had I seen it in any of these lives? No, there had been nothing which approached it. Perhaps it is most nearly achieved in absorption in creative work—artistic, scientific, or inventive. Yet even there it is often confused with ever so many highly personal qualities; with envy, with a craving for wealth, or fame, or power.

But the padre was infinitely simple, and we—of

another civilization—we, all of us by comparison, enormously complex.

Here was I, for example, with part of me deeply interested in the story of Claver; part of me absorbed in analyzing the padre who was telling me the story; not to mention what far things other brain-cells might be busy about. While the padre—the padre knew a singleness of emotion.

Nothing to him was of importance except the church, concretely represented in the life of Claver. He had alluded to one of the attacks by pirates. That attack had been a lurid experience for Cartagena. But to the padre it was significant only because a bomb had destroyed the altar before which Claver worshiped. The Revolution—he had mentioned the Revolution simply as it had affected Claver's church, Claver's room and Claver's remains. History was merely a plot in which moved the character of Pedro Claver.

And as the padre led the way down the stairs, under the arched gallery and across the patio to the church, he was still recounting the "blesséd miracle" of identifying the room.

I knew that we were being taken to the church to look upon the skeleton of the saint, and I knew that I would follow the padre, and yet I felt an extreme reluctance.

It seemed a gruesome liberty to go and look upon his bones. I had recoiled from the mere written description of those exhumed remains. The Claver whom I had pictured had nothing at all to do with the carefully enumerated bones which Cartagena had retained for itself and which I found listed:

“The cranium intact, one shoulder-blade, one humerus, one radius, the sternum, four carpal bones, three metacarpals,” and so on and so on.

No, these scientifically listed bones did not represent to me Pedro Claver.

Yet, because the eager padre expected it, I followed. Together we stood outside the church door, the door which opens into the cloistered patio, and the padre pulled a cord, ringing the bell which hung above the door. The bell gave one sudden little peal and then stopped, as though frightened at having so abruptly broken the peace without even a preliminary tinkle. Its cord was still trembling when it was answered in the person of a diminutive replica of the padre; a man smaller and more fragile, almost an elfin priest buttoned tightly in the long black cassock which narrows the shoulders and hollows the chest.

Silently he produced a great key, with which he opened and let us into the cool calm of the church. The hour was noon and the outer doors closed, so

that we had all to ourselves the dim desertion. Even the altar-candles were not burning, and there was only the sunlight streaming through stained glass; filtering through the deep reds and purples and yellows of stained glass; streaming in painted shafts of light into the still cool dark.

It did not seem possible that here soldiers had once had their noisy barracks.

But the black figure which had answered the summons of the bell was indicating that we should follow as he led the way to the altar through alternating spaces of shadow and of soft, drifting colored light.

The altar, the padre whispered, was symbolic. There were the sculptured shields of Pope Leo XIII and of that Italian Bishop of Cartagena who had done so much for the glory of Claver. There, above the cornice, were angels in the act of presenting garlands of roses to the new saint, the roses typifying the loveliness of his virtues. There were other angels rejoicing in the elevation of this Apostle of the Slaves, with Claver himself, represented in his sublime exaltation, with his eyes raised toward Heaven. We must notice, the padre said, that the saint's hands were crossed over his breast, because there dwelt the divine love, filling his heart.

And these things were pictured in marble—white marble, red-veined marble, and green marble.

“Most beautiful and symbolic,” whispered the padre. “All is symbolic.”

And now the slim black figure which had left us at the altar reappeared, bringing two short white candles. With a swift low prostration he stepped forward to lift the lacy altar-cloth which hung over what I knew would prove to be the urn containing those classified bones of the saint, Claver.

The cloth was raised . . . and there revealed was the urn: no longer than a child’s coffin, as though the listed bones had been laid, not in the formation of life, but telescoped to fit the urn which was of crystal and gold, held in the hands of two little winged figures.

“*Un craneo intacto*” . . . My memory reiterated the words of the description.

But the black figure was placing a candle in front of the urn, on the platform of the altar. The candle was lit, and in its unsteady flicker I saw . . . through the glass of the urn, I saw “a skull complete”, exactly as the list had stated; a skull resting upon a pillow of white lustrous satin embroidered elaborately in gold, while up to the chin of the skull was drawn a coverlet of white, similarly incrustated with gold.

None of the other bones were visible. Presumably they were assembled under the coverlet. Only the



head was to be seen, as it lay upon the pillow; not the grinning skull of physiology class-rooms, but a delicately formed skull lying on its pillow in a certain reposeful majesty.

And then I started, for there was a movement behind the altar, the lifting of a cloth and the appearing of that slender black form which had so far not uttered a word. It appeared in order to place and light another candle, this time on the opposite side of the transparent urn.

The living figure vanished, leaving us to contemplate the urn of gold and crystal wherein lay a skull upon satin, with satin drawn up under its chin. In the faint quiver of the two candles it lay in a stillness so eternal that even the padre no longer whispered about beauty and symbolism, marble and sculpture.

Yet the skull lying there in the urn . . . that surely was symbolic.

It was not gruesome, as I had feared. It was not even grim. It was solemn . . . final . . . inexorable. But, above all, it was quiet beyond all possibility of disturbance.

From time to time through the years people would come, as we had come; and lighted candles would be placed upon the floor briefly to illumine it. And then the altar-cloth would be dropped, and the

people would go softly away. While the skull lay forever motionless on its satin pillow.

Standing before it, we seemed in contrast palpitatingly alive, almost ostentatiously alive; part of a tense and quivering life passed down the long line of generations, seemingly endless generations; with here and there an individual like the padre, whose drama lay outside himself; the padre with his evident selflessness of emotion, living in the life of a long-dead saint.

When my eyes strayed from what was left of Claver to the living padre beside me, I saw that he was backing away from the altar. He seemed astonishingly tall, buttoned to the throat in his tight black gown; and he had thrown his arms out and back in a gesture of humility and devotion, in an abandon of surrender; while on his face was a light that did not come from candles, nor from tinted sunlight streaming through stained windows.

Thus the padre moved back across the platform and down through the chancel gate, the heavy soft-shod feet under his robe needing no guidance, unerringly finding their accustomed way.

Then out of the shadows came a living shadow to drop again the altar-cloth, to extinguish and take away the half-burned candles from which wax dripped, hot and sticky.

When we returned to the stiff wooden chairs of the reception-room, it was strange to find that sharply outlined patches of light and shade were still patterned under the cloisters; so long a time did we seem to have passed in the dim wonder of the church. Yet all was the same: chairs and sunlight and languorous banana-leaves brightly green against a wall gray with age.

The little man who had attended us in the church now brought fine old sherry from Spain and served it to us in thin, delicately chased glasses; and with it there were round, faintly sweet biscuit—Albert biscuit from England. And it was like drinking of new life to sip the warm glowing sherry.

But the padre's glass stood untouched, until the attending black robe moved forward and with a little gesture of pleading and of love indicated it, as though the wearer of the robe grieved that the padre should not share in the *fiesta* of sherry and biscuit.

And the padre, smiling, raised the glass to his lips, only to replace it still untouched upon the table; evidently fancying that we did not notice; but, observing, I recalled that in the little room on the left as you mount the stairs, in that little room with its memories of passionate pain, the padre had said to me, "Ah, señora, Claver was very *mortificado*."

In a moment we would go away, out through the heavy great doors with their iron bolts, out into the varied and complex world; while the padre would thus live on in the life of his saint, daily reflecting that life in countless such small mortifications.

And when the ponderous doors closed upon him as we stepped from the convent-cool into our waiting carriage, whose back and seats burned under Cartagena's midday sun, my mind was still pre-occupied with the little scene of renunciation, while I hoped that sterner mortifications belonged to the past.

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## CHAPTER VI

### STREETS OF ROSE AND BLUE

FATE had sent us a coachman. Not that there was any lack of coachmen in Cartagena, coachmen lolling in the drivers' seats of the more or less dilapidated victorias which awaited patrons. But these coachmen were coachmen merely, negligible quantities whose hands controlled reins and occasionally brandished whips.

During our first days in Cartagena we had stepped indifferently into whichever of these disengaged vehicles happened to be standing in front of the hotel. And then Fate sent a special coachman to whom the manipulation of reins was a trivial detail in a calling which he made as colorful as a prism.

Sitting in his high seat, his brown circular face broadly smiling, he was throwing merry salutations to passing acquaintances, at the same time that he carried on a lively conversation with a hotel employee lounging in the doorway. And he was as eager about our drive as though he, too, had come nearly two thousand miles to visit for the first time that little walled city on the shores of the Caribbean.

And I knew immediately that once more Fate had provided a medium through which I might enter into the spirit of a new land; seeing to some extent through native eyes; much as I had participated in the spirit of sixteenth-century Spanish America by means of my fantastic visualization of Rosaura, the sorceress.

Interpretative mediums are essential in the comprehension of an unfamiliar land. And they are not to be found among the cosmopolitan who are no longer typical, who have lost the distinctive flavor of the soil; but they must be sought among the simpler inhabitants, among coachmen and boot-blacks, itinerant monks and villagers, among all chance acquaintances of the road with whom one drifts quite naturally and happily into friendship.

In this search it is necessary to put one's own personality to sleep, nicely out of the way, and in that receptive state to await the bounty of Fate; alertly receptive, for one may never even guess in what form interpretation will come. For it by no means always appears in human guise but is often a combination of many small things; the fragment of a song, the cry of an animal in the forest, the swirl of a shadowy reflective river, or a heavy iron-studded door closed to the world. A wing-clipped bird commanded by a child may symbolize the life of a states-

man. Or it may be that in the contemplation of a saint's skull lying upon satin will swiftly come the coveted flash of revelation.

And it is in the sum of these revelations that the final interpretation lies, for observation, however detailed and accurate, is an imperfect and inadequate thing without revelation.

Thus in suspense I wait upon Fate, finding in the very uncertainty concerning the form of her manifestation, finding even in the anxiety lest after all this time she fail me, a large part of the adventuring lure of strange journeyings.

But the instant that I am confronted with the medium, or with the revelation, all uncertainty vanishes. I recognize beyond doubt the instrument through which I am to be permitted to share the spirit of a new land.

Thus in the case of this coachman of Fate it was at once apparent that he possessed the essential awareness of his environment, that he was responsive and without self-consciousness. I would look with him upon his world. . . .

To his carriage we had returned after that visit to the Church of San Pedro Claver, that visit in which we had found material testimony to the reality of the past. And, gathering up the reins, he had broken off with a bystander to inquire whether we



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had seen "the most precious relics" and visited the room of the saint; for he was ever solicitous that we miss nothing.

In his coach I was to pass much of my time in present-day Cartagena. Undisturbed in the shadow of its dark hood, I was to watch life flow through the streets, discussing occasionally that life with this medium provided by Fate.

In the hotel we rose with the day, knowing that we must take advantage of every moment of the brief cool dawn before the sun parched the little shadeless streets with a heat so tangible that all one's senses seemed aware of it, a heat which came on so quickly that our preparations for the day developed into a race against the sun.

To this hurrying dawn-cool belonged the vender of mangos, memorable because he was so unlike any one else in Cartagena. His cry would come up from the street below; the most imperative cry, a re-echoing command which even at that distance I scarcely dared disobey. His imperious voice announced that his mangos were of the sweetness of sugar and that they were five cents a dozen. He made that simple statement many times over in a voice such as a king might have affected in the days of divine rights.

His voice filled the narrow street and rose to overflow the rooms and halls of the hotel. He never added anything to his original declaration. He never urged purchases, his peremptory voice seeming to take them for granted. His was a voice which emphasized the resonant strength of the Spanish tongue rather than its musical romantic character. Where there was accentuation his voice underscored it; vowels were broadened and stressed, and consonants were staccato.

Every day at the same hour, with no slightest variation of manner or of substance, this mango-seller passed under my balcony like the incarnation of such psychological principles as the power of repetition and the magnetism of confidence.

Thus he cried, sounding that emphatic note which had no counterpart in the gentle lazy dawn:

*"Mangos de azucar! Cinco centavos por docena!"*—crying with his a's all strongly broad, and the final syllables of each phrase infinitely prolonged.

In spite of our race with the sun, I could never resist running out on the balcony to watch him, as he passed, slowly following his donkey in the middle of the street. And even that donkey had the air of a donkey of affairs, quite unlike the casual beast of the tropics.

Indeed, watching, from the balcony, this intimate couple, it seemed almost as though it were the donkey who indicated down which street they should turn.

With the passing of these partners the stentorian announcement of the sugar-sweetness of their mangos sounded ever fainter, but always, even in the diminuendo of distance, it was emphatic.

It was perhaps because of my gazing after man and donkey mango-sellers that we never won in our race against the coming of heat; never, although we ordered tea earlier and earlier until at last we reached the limit even of mulatto Alfonso's good nature. We advanced also the hour of the coachman's arrival, and yet no matter how early we set forth it was already hot when we drove out into the streets.

For always it is in the streets that I seek to capture the essential and distinctive quality of a city. Until the streets have spoken to me I am restless and without heart to present letters of introduction. The Church of San Pedro Claver and its padre had been an exception, for they were the link which made easy the transition from the past to the present.

With pockets full of letters of introduction, we therefore wander unknown in the streets of new

cities. Not until their elusive quality has been captured is it possible for me to drink champagne from the silver goblets of lovely ladies and courtly gentlemen. Necessary as I admit these people are to round out the complete picture, they must wait while I stalk my big game; while I patiently, eagerly pursue the spirit of the drifting, unconscious, inconsequent masses whose drama is played in the streets.

In Cartagena we drove, because in those tiny streets a stranger on foot is too conspicuous to stalk any sort of game successfully; for the wearers of hats and shoes seldom walk, and it is unusual to be quite so white as we who live under a northern sun. Then, too, it is disconcerting to be continually either hopping off the ledge of sidewalk, or flattening oneself against some wall in order that one may pass and be passed. Whereas, for my purpose, invisibility under the dark projecting hood of the carriage was ideal.

It was also ideal that our driving consisted more of pauses than of progress, for it was during our frequent stops to photograph that I would curl up in a corner of the carriage where, unseen, I watched and absorbed the moving stream of life.

In one of these pauses I discovered that to the

Colombians the English-speaking foreigner is a "meester," as the European in Asia is known as "sahib," both words serving their users as nouns as well as titles.

"See the meester with the camera!" or, "Meester, won't you take my picture?"

Thus from the street urchins of Cartagena the Optimist of our wanderings in Ecuador first received the name of "meester" which we were later to find applied to him throughout Colombia.

It was while this "meester" went off to photograph that I would watch and meditate in my coach of invisibility, waiting and hoping for some clue to the Spirit of Cartagena.

Waiting, I listened to girlish confidences called frankly from behind the blue window-bars of a rose-colored house, called across to the friend behind the green window of an azure house, the street so narrow that the girls scarcely seemed to raise their voices in the pretty Spanish melody which is their talk.

In doorways, tinted to match the shutters and gratings of the glassless windows, tiny naked children whose skin was like polished walnut played in the dust. There were soft shouts and treble laughter.

Somewhere a woman crooned a song; a song about a lovely little sky. "Ay!—ay!—ay!—ay!" It was such a lovely little sky!

From time to time a milkman rattled by on his donkey, the man perched between two big, shiny milk-tins quite blinding in the sun. And there were men with wheelbarrows, each barrow numbered as we number automobiles.

"Why are the barrows numbered?" I put my question to the fat muscleless back of the coachman. And the very crumpled white suit in the driver's seat twisted round, ready as always for conversation.

The barrows, he explained, were registered at the office of the police. The names, addresses, and photographs of their owners all were on the official files. The coachmen, too, and their carriages were similarly registered. And, fishing in his pockets, he proudly produced the picture of himself which the law compelled him to carry. Cartagena, he boasted, was "very well arranged."

Returning to my silent invisibility, I listened to an old man who cried lottery-tickets. He cried indolently, as though it did not much matter whether the tickets were sold. Bananas were cheap, and one could lie down almost anywhere to sleep, while in the sunny heat clothes were so scanty as to be

scarcely a problem. It was not really necessary to sell many tickets.

The philosophic old man was followed by a tray heaped with plantains, borne on the head of a comfortable barefoot negress in a white lawn dress. At lazy intervals she proclaimed, "I sell plantains, very delicious plantains!"

The tray balanced itself perfectly, and thin gray rags of smoke floated away from her cigar. Sometimes she stopped before a vivid door-step to negotiate a sale; and sometimes she met a friend, and in their animated chat she would seem to forget all about the superior quality of that pile of green plantains, so nicely balanced on her head. Then all at once she and her trailing wisps of smoke would move on to the tune of "I sell plantains, very delicious plantains!"

The women who came and went in those colorful streets were all mulattos, negresses, or *mestizos*, all half-caste women of what civilization calls the lower classes; for the feminine aristocracy of Cartagena live in cloistered seclusion behind the balconies of the more pretentious houses. In Cartagena it is still a serious matter to be a lady.

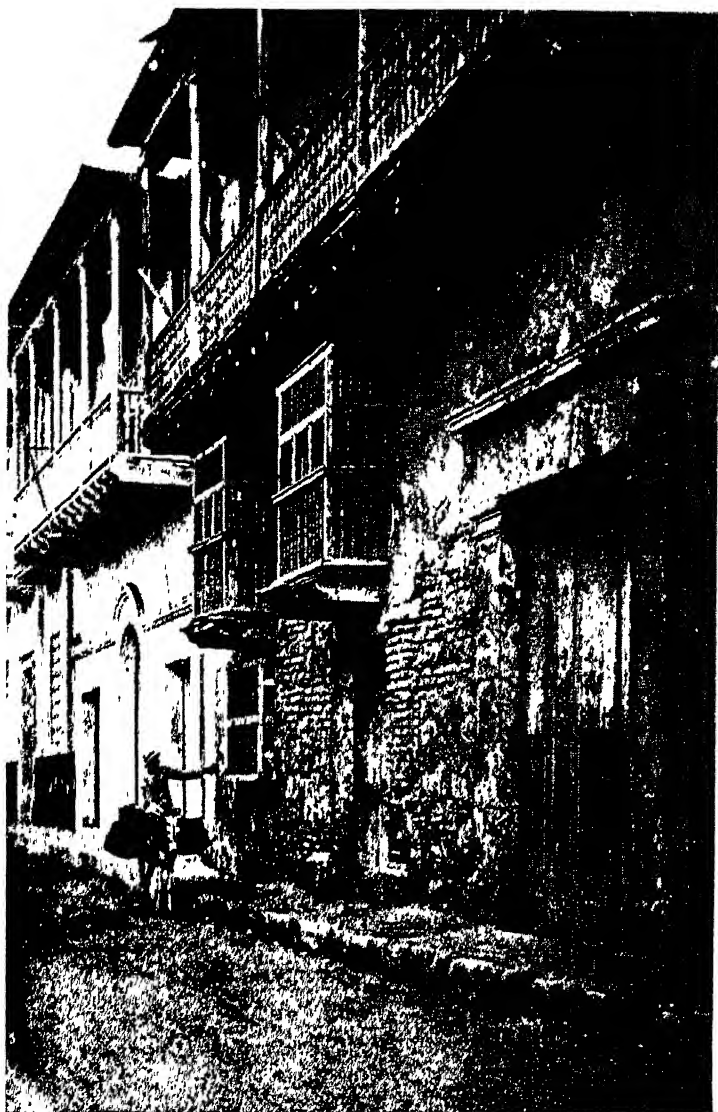
Those freer women whom I loved to watch as they moved through the varied pageant of the streets were, like the plantain-seller, generally barefoot and



in clean, often stiffly starched, frocks of calico or lawn, white or flower-sprigged in pink and blue. All wore little medals on short necklaces or chains or beads; religious medals such as the priests of the conquest so long ago hung about the necks of the baptized, in order to distinguish them from the heathen. And all seemed possessed of an inexhaustible supply of amiable talk and an unlimited number of acquaintances.

By half-past eight the heat of Cartagena is intense, and it is then that the waterman lifts up his refreshing cry. The waterman marches ahead of his cart, and his cart consists of a barrel lying prone between two supporting wheels, the whole drawn by a leisurely little donkey. And sometimes the barrels are a bright crude blue, sometimes yellow and often scarlet. In nondescript costume the owner leads the way, sounding his cool cry of "Water! Water!" two gallons of it for five cents.

And I would watch the passing of his cart. In the brilliant sunlight it cast sharp shadows; the shadows of wooden wheels revolving; wheels whose heavy wooden spokes were repeated in shadow. There was also a shadow donkey picking up and placing his little feet; four little feet picked up and placed, picked up and placed, all in clear-cut moving shadow.



IN STREETS OF ROSE AND BLUE



Still other donkeys carried their masters mounted between great wicker panniers of green clustered fruit which was peddled from door to door.

"Those are *mamones*, *mi señora*," the coachman explained as he purchased for our refreshment.

Together then, the coachman and I ate *mamones*, I copying his method; using the thumb-nail to free the fruit of its thick, hard, green skin, and then popping the jelly-like globe whole into the mouth, and later disposing of the large round stone, ejecting it in the highly plebeian manner demanded by *mamones*. The jelly substance which encircles the stone is delicately acid, and each fruit contains so little that it is possible to eat as many as one has time and patience to consume.

And as we sat cozily eating *mamones*, we discussed what I must surely see in Cartagena and what religious ceremonies I must not miss.

There was the procession of Our Lady of Carmen. I must certainly see it, for "the Lady goes in much luxury; being an image very precious and possessed of many jewels." I must by all means see her procession.

And as we talked, occasionally a motor or another coach would turn suddenly and sharply into our street, turning with warning clank of bell or honk of horn. And then the current of human and of

donkey life stepped aside, to resume in a moment its placid way as though it had never known a carriage or a motor.

From time to time "meester" would return for another film-pack, or perhaps to summon the coachman's help in the posing of some particularly difficult subject.

During one of these absences the coachman was informed by a policeman that it was a violation of the law to leave a vehicle with no one in it; and I could never decide whether that was Latin-American opinion of my sex, or whether it was proof of the invisibility which I sought in the shadow of the hood.

When the sun had mounted high and hot there were no more street-criers and no more door-to-door peddlers of milk and water and fruit. The heat was dry and stifling and superlative. The only moving thing was a shadow passing along the deserted street, the shadow of a high-soaring vulture.

It was eleven o'clock, and whistles were blowing.

"Factory whistles," my coachman volunteered, turning in his high seat. "When we drive outside the walls, señora, I will show you our factories. We have factories for the making of tile and cloth and shoes. Their whistles are blowing now for the siesta. The men will not work again until one o'clock."

"Their pay," he replied to my question, "their pay depends. It is from one to three dollars a day."

The whistles shrilled high, amazingly discordant in the still noon heat.

"Yes, señora, we have factories. And sometimes . . . sometimes we have strikes!"

He spoke with that air of pride with which certain hotels of my acquaintance vaunt their plumbing, speaking as though strikes and plumbing were offered as indisputable evidence of modern progress.

"Oh, yes, señora; sometimes we have strikes."

Driving back through the torrid deserted streets and thinking over those watching hours of invisibility, considering the chance words of a coachman sent by Fate, I knew in the sudden way of revelation that the streets had spoken. My groping anxiety slipped away; and I felt strangely light and happy, as is the way after revelation.

In the coming days I would subject this swift intuition to proof, testing it everywhere with fact. Meanwhile it might lie waiting in my heart, a secret between me and the flowing life of the streets.

The world of those painted streets stops at the door of the hotel. It extends to the very threshold, but there it ends and something else begins.

The entrance-hall, which is also the lobby, the

lounge, and the reception-room, is flush with the sidewalk, so that the big wide-open doors seem to invite the street; but the street pauses only to offer a shoe-shine or a newspaper and then goes on its detached way as though it had no concern with the life of the hotel.

On either side of this hall, which is very little wider than the generous doors, are ranged big rocking-chairs with cane backs and seats, chairs whose great black scrollwork arms extend themselves to form the rockers. Across a ten-foot space these rows of rockers face each other.

And there it is the custom of the hotel guests to sit, also facing each other, while they wait for the whir of electric fans to announce a meal. It is not well to go in before you hear the fans, for you will disturb the swarms of flies which, as it were, eat at the first table.

So we would sit waiting for the fans, while one by one the chairs were occupied. And there was then so much temptation to speculate about the reality behind the human masks that the imagination forgot to dwell upon the probable past of flies.

The men who came to sit in the chairs were all perspiring in the hot breathless air, heavily perspiring. So was the Jamaican negro who managed the hotel to the best of his ability under the given cir-

cumstances. So, too, were the servants, the newsboy standing in the door, and the ebony laundress mounting the wide stone staircase with her snowy work piled high in the basket on her head. Before the late afternoon wind springs up, every one in Cartagena is thus perspiring. It seems a common human bond, like original sin; and, considering its inevitability in such a climate, it is not surprising that the early eighteenth-century traveler, Ulloa, remarks that he found "wigs not much worn in Cartagena."

I wilted at the mere thought of what we should all be in wigs, when even the white suits of the rocking-men were limp!

Most of these men who waited for the fans were smooth-shaven, thin-lipped, and going early bald; they seemed tired and disillusioned, yet with a never-say-fail expression, as though they were fortified by a grim determined courage.

They would sit staring out upon the street, but I was sure that they found no comfort in the fact that the University of Cartagena just across the way had vermilion walls and that its balconies and shuttered windows were of deep bright blue. They didn't look as though they saw vermilion and blue with a Sacred Heart over the doorway, let alone extracting any comfort from it. No, they looked as though they



were thinking about oil. And perspiring in breathless heat must be pretty dismal if you are thinking of oil and compressing your lips to a grim line over the conviction that you must—absolutely must—make good in the matter of oil, before returning triumphant to some skeptical little home town which has possibly prophesied a bad end because something in you had prevented your settling down to whatever happened to be expected.

Occasionally it was a Britisher who came to sit in one of the cane rockers, bringing with him an impression of physical well-being; flourishing an astonishingly large handkerchief, fresh with the spicy scent of eau de Cologne, and taking a frank pride in the cut and the laundering of his white suit.

The Englishman, while remaining always impenetrably an Englishman, is rarely at serious war with his environment, however alien it may be. He has been driven to roam the world, and he speaks easily of the Congo, the Gold Coast, China, the Malay States—

This experience wide and inescapable has taught him the care of the body under all manner of conditions. He knows the folly of scorning small accustomed comforts and takes them with him. And he has learned the enormous influence of one's appearance upon one's morale.

When, as we sat waiting, one of these globe-wanderers shook out his coolly fragrant handkerchief I felt that he might be thinking to himself: "Jolly old building, that! All vermilion and blue with the Sacred Heart over the door."

As the days passed and the chairs came to know each other better, they often fell into talk; brief scraps of talk before, and sometimes for the space of a smoke, after meals.

One of these rocking-men happened to be a Scotchman, fond of talking of Sumatra. "In Sumatra," he would say, "in Sumatra, where I was prospecting for gold, I lived four years on the top of a hill with jungle all around me; miles and miles of it. My men made a clearing where they built my house, and I had them cut away enough bush to make room for a garden. Oh, I had wonderful vegetables; my own fowls, too . . . always fresh eggs.

"When the Dutch officials came by on inspection I was able to serve them a first-rate dinner. I even had champagne on top of my hill in the jungle.

"I lived there four years, alone but for my natives, never seeing another soul except those stray officials. Yet I was sad to leave my place in Sumatra. At night there was always a breeze, and I'd pull up my blanket—the same blanket I've with me now, fine Scotch wool and a beauty.

“Yes, I was sad to leave my place. It was ever so long before I could go to sleep without missing the jungle voices . . . tigers talking to each other in the jungle, you know.”

And now this man was outfitting to prospect up the Sucio River; staying on in Cartagena long enough to make the careful preparations of the seasoned explorer; providing for every emergency, taking along every possible comfort to mitigate the climate.

Such a man is almost certain not to return with lines of bitter disillusionment etched around thin lips.

But if this Scotchman impersonated man directing destiny, we had in a certain engineer, who rocked with us, the incarnation of the survival of the fittest: a man who had knocked about Mexico and Central and South America; leading a rough uncared-for life, until with the years, he had passed through a private evolution of his own; becoming completely adjusted; having survived so many tropical diseases, from which comrades perished, that he had come at last to resemble an old garment, so long worn that every line has shaped itself to habitual custom.

I could n't feel that this engineer bothered about vermilion walls, but then he did n't need to; he had

his engines and his pipe and the tales of his experiences. Having started without illusions, he had lost none and needed none.

His job in Cartagena, he said, was to "put into oil" the locomotives of the little railway which connects Cartagena with the Magdalena at Calamar. Were we going into the interior? Then we would see on the La Dorada line a couple of engines he'd put into oil. He didn't know where he was going next, but there were plenty of locomotives in South America to be transformed into oil-burners.

We had originally dropped into talk with this engineer because he had overheard us speaking of Ecuador, and he had called from his table to ours, calling above the buzz of fans and the clatter of dishes, to ask when we had been in Ecuador, and whether we had known So-and-so, who was an employee of the Guayaquil-to-Quito Railway.

Outside, in the rockers, he had from time to time pursued his reminiscences, giving a flat nasal pronunciation to all the pretty Spanish and Indian names of places, places which had once seen mighty deeds in the shadow of giant snow mountains, but which were known to him only as they fell into the schedule of railroad life.

Did we know, for example, that one employee had recently killed another? Both were friends of his.

He'd just had the news, but he had himself long ago heard the threat made:

First employee to second: "I tell you I don't like your face, and what 's more I intend to change it."

Second employee: "But it 's all the face I 've got, an' I 'm used to it."

Second employee to engineer as they walked away in the night, for one of them was "due to take the milk-train out of Ambato":

"Some day I 've got to kill that man."

Well, here was news that at last his friend had done it and then, of course, had to skip the country; and to think that he'd heard him say, walking over to the engine in the yards at Ambato, that some day he'd have to kill Joe. . . .

"Gosh," he resumed, after giving his pipe the minute care exacted by pipes, "Gosh, but it 's fine to meet folks who 've traveled the line from Huigra over the mountains!"

And often there would come to where we sat in the rockers the exotic child whose natural habitat was among the daisy-fields of a temperate land; a child transplanted to that tropical hotel, where she had become pathetically pale and pathetically thin; a meager child with great, dark, heavy-lashed eyes

in a delicate face wan as a moon-flower in the dusk. She would slip her thin little arm in mine and whisper to me that she knew what was to be for dessert . . . ice-cream . . . she 'd asked for it. And did I know that her father, who was up the Atrato River prospecting for oil, might bring her a monkey? She loved monkeys, simply loved them.

She was by turns imperious and by turns intimate with the hotel servants, showing an amazing mastery of colloquial Spanish.

"But I can't read," she told me; "is n't it a pity? And I'm eight years old! . . . Do you like to bargain in the shops? I do, and I never pay what they ask . . . never. . . . I say: '*No!* I won't pay you three dollars. I will only pay you one.' And I always get it for one. I will go with you when you shop . . . if you like.

"Do you see these men? They are all my friends. They give me sweets and take me for automobile rides. They are sorry for me, because . . ."

Her soft white frock nestling against me, she would pour forth a stream of talk; rapid and a trifle hysterical; her frail little body quivering with nervous resentment. I soon realized that this appalling moon-flower child had learned to capitalize her woes, playing her sordid little cards for all they

were worth. But then she should n't have had such cards to play; she should have been frisking about like a young lamb among daisies and buttercups.

The cane rockers of the lobby were thus orchestra seats, and the play . . . the play might be called, "The Nordic in the Tropics," a drama of adventure, of tragedy, and often of high achievement.

Thus did the life of the streets stop at the threshold; and there was within no echo of what was without, no echo of what the streets whispered.

The House of the Inquisition in Cartagena still stands on the west side of the little square where three centuries ago was held the first Auto de Fe. But the square is no longer the Plaza de la Inquisición. It is now the Parque de Bolívar—Bolívar whose revolution not only won independence for Colombia, but at the same time put an end to the Inquisition and initiated the movement to abolish slavery.

About his equestrian statue, so young and so triumphant that his melancholy death at Santa Marta seems incredible, there stands a circle of regal palms whose tall symmetric trunks rise like pale columns to support the green grace of their plumed heads. This park of Bolívar is a tiny place, a place

of indolent peace, where I loved to sit; sitting so quiet that the emerald lizards continued running races around the dry basins of vermilion fountains, which did not play because water was a precious thing, to be peddled in carts.

I would sit in that lazy peace with gold butterflies drifting about like petals from the sun, and high in the palms the clear, confident call of "kiskadees."

And it was not until the peace of the present had veiled past horrors that I passed through the imposing doorway, under the Spanish arms, and into the House of the Inquisition itself.

The private family which now occupies the house made us welcome, and "meester" had permission to photograph where he pleased. And he pleased, by means of a ladder, to climb to the roof that he might secure a series of views over the city; leaving me with one of the sweet-eyed daughters of the house.

We had mounted by spacious stone stairs from the first floor to the second and finally to the third; passing along wide galleries surrounding the central patio. We had looked into the huge airy rooms which open from these galleries; rooms where modern furniture fraternized with ponderous old heritages from colonial days; rooms whose floors were



tilled in cool black and white squares. The thing that one remembers, however, is not the furnishing of these rooms but their size, their proportion, and the luminous atmosphere which floods them with clear white light.

“Where are the dungeons?” I asked.

“The dungeons, señora, as well as the room of torture were subterranean. All have been closed, long ago closed; and during the Revolution the instruments were destroyed. There remains only the bed of torment, which now serves as the grating of a window in the cathedral.”

But these past things did not interest the modern daughter of the House of the Inquisition. She wanted to know what Colombians we had met in New York; for she was certain to know various members of their large family connection.

Such conversation with a Latin-American is a thorough drill in all words which define family relationships: and if you would be fluent you must have ready for immediate use the Spanish equivalents for grandmother and grandfather; father and mother; uncle and aunt; brother and sister; grandson and granddaughter; niece and nephew; the masculine and feminine of cousin; so on through all the in-laws, each with its proper gender.

Standing at an upper window of the House of the

Inquisition my companion pointed out to me the roof of the house of the son-in-law of that Señora X whom I had known in the United States, at the same time confiding that her own family was large. I was to imagine that her mother had seventeen children. . . . Did I think that was many? . . . But seven of them had died; so after all there were only ten, and ten was not many. . . . I should know the women of the Departamento de Antioquia: they had really many; a woman in Antioquia had been known to have twenty-nine children.

“We are all married,” she continued, “all ten of us. Some of us live here with our parents; others have villas in the suburbs, in Manga and in Cabrero. Have you seen Manga and Cabrero, and do you not think them lovely?”

These were subjects more interesting than dungeons; they were the things that filled her life, personal and important things.

And then she concluded with a small sigh, “But we marry ourselves too young.” She sighed and went away, perhaps a little bewildered at having expressed so revolutionary a thought.

After she left me I remained looking out over the view which from the roof “meester” was photographing. I looked over red-tiled roofs, red with the dull soft red of Pompeii; irregular roofs of vary-

ing shapes and heights, across to the old square tower of the Church of Santo Domingo, buff-colored and moss-grown, with old bells hanging in the tower. I looked upon balconies whose little protecting roofs had sky-blue linings and whose jalousies were painted any happy color that their owners had fancied. I looked down upon patios, upon the heads of palms lifted as though to investigate their neighbors' domains.

I watched the downward flight of vultures coming to perch on the red roofs, alighting with their bodies horizontally balanced for a moment before they straightened to an erect position, alighting with a rustle of wings like the rustle of stiff old-fashioned black silk skirts. Here and there on the roofs vultures thus perched; perching with an air of irreproachable dignity, as though they scorned all who labored for a living, who did not like themselves wait for Providence to provide; while in the patios crowing roosters celebrated female achievement, and under the shadow of the foliage doves drowsily cooed and insistent "kiskadees" fluted their gaily reiterated question:

*"Qu'-est-ce-qu'-il-dit? Qu'-est-ce-qu'-il-dit?"*

"What does the House say?" I questioned, following their example.



THE BÓVEDAS



What does it say? . . . Why, the House of the Inquisition which fronts on the Parque de Bolívar, the House and the Parque and the soft-eyed daughter of the house who had made the sudden discovery that they "married themselves too young,"—all spoke with the voice of the streets.

"The Inquisition," said the coachman, as we proceeded one afternoon to visit what the Cartagenians call the *bóvedas*, "The Inquisition was established in Cartagena in the year 1610 and was finally abolished in the year 1821."

The ease with which the Latin-American can at will produce the dates of his history is amazing. Almost any wayside acquaintance can supply the year, the month, and the day of the "first cry of independence in America of the South." And many will be able to add the names and dates of battles and the dates upon which individual cities achieved their independence. None of these dates will be abbreviated by so much as the slurring of a syllable; your informant rattling off the long phrases as easily as he breathes. To your "When?" he will, for example, immediately respond, "*En el año mil ochocientos veinte y uno.*"

For the average Latin-American is more conscious

of his history than are we of the United States, possibly because it is an important factor in his ancestry. He is of a new and composite race, in which the blood of conqueror and conquered must inevitably struggle for supremacy during the process of crystallization into a new form.

So our coachman of mixed races, pointing with his whip to the city walls, would comment that they were many years in building, "But by the slaves, señora . . . under the lash of the Spaniards." And in his bitterness there was strangely an echo of pride; for although it was his blood which in that long ago had built Cartagena's walls, it was also his blood which had wielded the lash. Thus his Spanish blood seemed to cry, "Behold my wonderful walls!" while the darker blood moaned, "Many years in building . . . by slaves . . . under the lash. . . ."

Frequently this coachman would pause to recall some memory of Spaniard or of revolutionist: in these streets after the great siege lay the corpses of those who had perished of hunger or disease; in this house or that had lived one of the martyrs who more than a hundred years ago gave his life for the independence of Colombia.

I had read the dreary lists of those martyrs; name after name followed by the fatal words "shot in Cartagena."

Manuel de Anguiano, colonel . . . shot in Cartagena.

José Marfa Porticarrero, merchant . . . shot in Cartagena.

Antonio José de Ayes, doctor and lawyer . . . shot in Cartagena.

Manuel de Catillo Rada, general . . . shot in Cartagena.

So on and on, with an occasional "hanged" substituted for "shot."

The memory of these melancholy lists so endures in Cartagena that the words "*Los españoles*" and "*Los mártires*" are common even upon the lips of coachmen.

It was, of course, the Spaniards who had built the *bóvedas* to which we drove, and the *bóvedas* consist of a long arcade of high-vaulted compartments built in the wall near the old reservoir and the bastion. In the days of the *españoles* these great vaults were used as prisons, while in various later wars they served as barracks. Now, under the protection of the Society of San Vicente, they are homes where needy families may live without payment of rent.

From the opposite side of the wall, where it faces the sea, the presence of these *bóvedas* is indicated by tall narrow loopholes cut in the thickness of the massive wall. The coachman, who had left his carriage in charge of an urchin and come with us to explore, explained that the loopholes once let in light and air to prisoners upon whom the great outer doors of the vaults had closed.

"Here," he said, "where we now stand, is filled-in



land. In the days of the Spaniards the sea came up and beat against the walls. Sometimes when the sea was high it entered through the loopholes until the prisoners inside stood deep in water. Many died, they say, died there in the *bóvedas*."

From the top of the wall we passed to the bastion through a little tunnel, in the floor of which the feet of men had worn deep ruts. Through this tunnel we came out over what was once a drawbridge; past a white sentry-box, and on to the parapet, in which were openings for guns; across another drawbridge to more gun-embrasures, and finally to a sentry-tower at the edge of the sea.

To the right along the beach stretched the suburb of Cabrero; a line of white houses among palms and scarlet flamboyant trees. Close under the shadow of the wall clustered thatched huts with cocoanut-palms whispering above their peaked roofs, while brown children bathed in a sea of jade.

Further investigation of the wall led us to the discovery that an entire family had taken up residence in a short tunnel, very like the entrance to an underground railway. The family was complete even to a cat and a baby.

This is the most interesting section of Cartagena's wall; for not only are the *bóvedas* and the tunnels found here, but here also is the old reservoir which

was one of the greatest of the achievements of the Spaniards, whose constant aim was to render more and more invincible the city where quantities of gold and silver were assembled for shipment to Spain. Cartagena must be able to resist attack by land or by sea, and it must be able to withstand siege.

We walked about on the masonry roof of this reservoir, examining the many little gutters, or trenches, which collect and convey the rain through traps into the tank, which still, three hundred years later, supplies the adjoining part of the town.

Close by are those *bóvedas* where the Spaniards had kept their prisoners—water and prisoners thus guarded by this the strongest part of the wall.

To reach the *bóvedas* from the wall we descended the long ramp up which cannon were rolled into position in the days when Cartagena was bombarded by pirates, descending to a long arcade of rose-colored stucco.

In each of the great compartments which front on the arcade we found a family living. The heavy doors were now wide open, letting in the light and air denied those long-ago prisoners. Often the compartments were divided into two or more rooms by means of a rope over which were hung lengths of cloth, with a curtain draped back in the center to provide a passageway. And under the arcade

swarmed a population of goats and pigeons, dogs, cats, and chickens, with which assemblage the human inhabitants democratically mingled.

When the sun was low we would put down the top of the carriage, and then the children of the *bóvedas* flocked like twittering birds about me.

“Why do you write, señora?”

“Behold, the señora has a book full of writing!”

“I can write, too.”

“We go to school, and there they teach us to write.”

“But why do you write in the coach, señora?”

“See, her pencil is the color of gold!”

“Is it truly gold?”

And they would confide to me what was important in their lives, volunteering apropos of nothing:

“My father died ten months ago. These are my three sisters . . . María, Concepción, and Iñez. We live here in the *bóvedas*, and it costs us not a cent. Our mother gains money by washing and ironing.”

Or another would announce, “Every day we swim in the sea, señora.”

And there was a little girl, immaculately neat in abbreviated blue and white calico, with white canvas pumps strapped over brown ankles and with a necklace of little silver beads from which hung the usual religious medal. She wanted to tell me all about

how her father had once been wounded by a bull. It was at the feast of Our Lady of Candelaria . . . on February 2. No, her father was not a bull-fighter; he was merely "conducting the bull."

When we drove away, this child murmured gracefully that she was "very happy to have met" us.

It was Sunday morning, and the Church of Santo Domingo gradually filled until all its rows of wooden benches were occupied. We had arrived early when it was still quite empty and when the belated night breeze blew a faint challenge to the day.

The Church of Santo Domingo is wide and high, with huge doors through which light pours into the white and gold of the spacious interior. We sat in that luminous whiteness where stirred the tardy little night breeze, wafting as it stirred the accumulated perfume of incense. And up in the moss-grown tower the old bells summoned as the church slowly filled.

The assembling congregation which entered with the light were not in the somber black of the churches of the high plateau but in a garb as tropical as the warm, wide-flung light. The women came in dresses of white or lavender, rose or blue, with mantillas draped over high Spanish combs, lace mantillas of white or black. Only an occasional dowager was all

in black. And as these figures took their places and dropped forward to their knees they became all lovely and provocative; for the lacy cascade of a mantilla falling over the shoulders promises always beauty.

Up in the square buff tower the ancient bells jangled while the church thus filled.

Schools and orphanages came, marshaled like regiments by the priests or nuns in charge. There was a troop of little girls in Virgin blue, which is the soft sky-blue of a summer day; and over the heads of these children were thrown filmy white scarfs, as cumulous clouds float in the summer sky when it is Virgin blue. This company of girls was directed by Sisters of Charity in voluminous tan dresses with flapping winged head-gear, like aëroplanes. There were other groups of girls in tan with white veils tied about their heads, knotted at the back and hanging to their waists; there were groups all in white with white lace mantillas; while companies of little school-boys, awkward in their Sunday best, came in charge of padres.

Outside a military band played, and to its martial music three white-uniformed officers entered and passed slowly down the great length of the church to seats reserved for them before the chancel. They had clanking spurs on their white shoes and shiny





THE VIRGIN GOES ON PROCESSION

swords at their sides, while in their hands they carried white caps with wide crimson bands.

Great seven-branched candlesticks were lit before the altar. It was the day of that celebration of the Virgin which we had been urged not to miss; and her shrine was festooned with garlands of pink roses and bright with many fluttering candles.

The band had gone away, and up in the mossy tower again the bells clanged; from the rear of the church a great ecclesiastical personage entered at the head of the procession of choir-boys. This was the archbishop, very gorgeous in his magenta robe with hood and skullcap of cerise. Some day I may forget the magenta and cerise, but always I must remember his hand, his large soft white hand which continually blessed, as he moved down the aisle, blessing those on the right and those on the left.

At the altar robe upon robe was added to this bishop until when he finally came forward to sing the mass he was a mountain of magnificence, topped by a tall gold miter.

By this time the church was crowded, with many standing in the aisles. The night breeze had gone; the candles burned steadily without flicker, and in the heat of the church women fanned incessantly with little light fans.

Mass in that great tropical church was very im-



posing; very Catholic in its pomp; very exotic in its setting, with the countless vibrant fans like gauzy pulsating little wings.

But it was not until a dark young priest in a black gown began to speak from the pulpit that I heard again the voice of the streets.

The priest spoke clearly and slowly, addressing himself often to the Virgin, whose rose-decked image he faced; reviewing her earthly sorrows, from that night when there was no room in the inn, to the final hour of her anguish before the cross, when she knew the supreme agony of being powerless to help one whom she loved.

Always the priest reiterated that she who had known sorrow, all sorrow, was "our Mother."

Upon a later occasion I attended a similar service where the officiating priest, whose Spanish was of Castile, dwelt entirely upon the fact that the holy "María" was now a princess—a *princesa*. And he gave to the pronunciation of the *c* its Castilian sound of *th*. His "María" was thus a "printhesa"; a royal princess living in a glory beyond description. And he, too, reiterated that she was "our Mother"; that the lowliest had this close connection with a splendor beyond any ever known to the royalty of earth.

But I had been aware of no emotional response to

what he had said. Small boys had been sending off fire-crackers in the very doorway of the cathedral, in honor, of course, of the Virgin. But I could not somehow imagine fire-crackers going off while the priest of Santo Domingo spoke that morning so simply of the "Mother" who, having known all sorrow, understood all sorrow.

It was as though that young dark priest spoke from the heart of a Cartagenian to the hearts of all Cartagenians; speaking not with the accent of Europe, but with the very intonation of that Latin-American city in the year 1923; speaking to the heart that has evolved from a past of fear, of cruelty, and of much pain.

And while he spoke the church was very still; the little girls in Virgin blue and in tan and in white—all were still. Even the boys were still, and the young men who stood in the aisles.

In the afternoon, when the cool trade-wind blew from the northeast, the procession formed to carry Santo Domingo's Virgin on her yearly tour of the streets.

A silk banner led the way, its ribbons held by three young girls, the richness of whose costumes showed them to be of the sheltered class so rarely seen in the public streets of Latin-America. But in honor of

the image of the Virgin, silk and satin, of scarlet or green or white, with dainty matching slippers and spangled coronets, would walk the dusty streets.

Diminutive flower-girls, embryonic señoritas, were dressed as blue or white angels with long feathered wings reaching to their baby heels. Behind them was the image, surrounded by pink roses and clusters of burning candles, and standing on a platform borne on the shoulders of four men. Behind the image an acolyte swung his censer. And there followed priests and choir, a military band, a company of soldiers, and finally the congregation falling into the line, silk and lace side by side with faded calico and bare feet.

It was thus that the procession passed out into the streets, where spectators filled balconies and windows, crowded in doorways and on the ledges of sidewalks.

We passed down the Street of Santo Domingo, into the Street of the Inquisition, around Bolívar's palmy little Park, into the Street of the Star, the Street of the Mantilla, and back to the church.

Along the way the infant angels strewed flowers from their silver baskets, the band played gay brave music, and from time to time men stepped forward to relieve the bearers of the image; all Cartagena

doing gala homage to the Virgin who understands sorrow.

And through these same streets once wound in mournful procession the victims of the first Auto de Fe, passing at dawn and carrying green candles which flickered in their trembling hands. . . .

Thus the streets of Cartagena speak continually of their past as well as of their present: the past speaking in accents of merciless daring and of dark pain; the present—the present, as gently as the doves which softly coo in the patios, speaking of a happy gentleness and tolerance, as though the soul of the people had in this fashion reacted to what had gone before.

In the days which followed we revisited the *bóvedas*, the walls, and the churches; we sat in the plazas and investigated the shops. We walked, or drove, up and down the streets until we had covered either on foot or in the carriage every inch of Cartagena.

Everywhere there was the same gentle spirit; never a voice raised against another; never the sound of a Colombian parent punishing a child. We were even run into one night as we drove across the bridge which leads to the suburb of Manga; a

demoralized motor driving straight into us, head on. But our placid horse took no more notice of the incident than if he had been really the Canton flannel animal he so strongly resembled. The driver was grieved but not angry. After a confidential conversation with the horse, he remounted and drove on. The police later stopped us to inquire details. But no one was greatly disturbed.

So does Cartagena remain happily calm after the turbulence of its past.

All this led me to visit the prison, there to subject to a final test the revelation of the streets.

In one of the best books on Colombia, written some fifteen years ago, I had come across this paragraph:

The Colombian prisons are a disgrace, dirty, insanitary, full of vermin, without cots (no great hardship, however, as their inmates are accustomed to sleeping on the floor or on the ground) and rations so scanty and poor that prisoners usually have food brought in daily by their families or friends.

The prison, therefore, would be a test.

From its exterior Cartagena's prison has small resemblance to what we think of as a jail, for it is housed in the old convent of San Diego; and, aside from the armed soldier in a sentry-box outside the door, there is nothing to indicate that the pacing figures of the religious no longer tell their beads in its cloisters.

Within, a man whom we took to be the warden, since he seemed in authority, put himself at our service, and together we inspected the prison; the chapel, the kitchens, the dining-room, and the bedrooms.

I didn't fancy the odor of the dark chapel, but the bedrooms were reasonably light, and provided with cots; while the kitchen was quite a pattern of neatness.

The prisoners we found variously employed in making napkin-rings of horn, decorating bowls made of gourds, weaving the hemp sandals so commonly used in Colombia; while in a carpenter's shop they were designing and constructing furniture.

All were in the casual dress of a small tropical town, nondescript trousers and nondescript collarless shirts. None had the look of being watched; when we entered a room there was no sense of change in its desultory atmosphere, the men going quietly on with their work, apparently unaware of the presence of warden and guests.

Out in the patio under the scanty shade of a papaya-tree, after properly admiring a trim vegetable garden where lettuce and beets and radishes were laid out in tidy rows, I commented to the warden upon the absence of uniforms.

"Oh, but we have uniforms," he said. "They

just happen to be worn out, and we are waiting for new ones from Bogotá."

"But I hoped you did n't believe in uniforms!"

"Ah, señora, how else would you know the difference between the criminals and the rest of us?"

How, indeed? For the prisoners we had observed at work in the shops had simple mild faces. So had the warden, and so perhaps had we. Thus the answer to the question would have led into a discussion of what after all makes a criminal.

I have often wondered since whether those uniforms ever came from Bogotá, or whether they had been invented on the spur of the moment, in the fear that a señora from a foreign land might think disparagingly of a country which did not degrade its prisoners by the very garments they wore! Nowhere in Colombia did I see any official prison garb, and it seemed singular that all uniforms should have been worn out at the same time.

I asked about capital punishment, and was told that the death penalty had been abolished and that the heaviest sentence the law can inflict is twenty years' imprisonment, which term, except in the case of murder, may be shortened for good behavior.

Bringing us to a pause in the door of the carpenters' shop, the warden said: "One of our prisoners speaks English. I think he would like to talk to

you. He has served nine years of his murder sentence. He is one of the best men we have, a good man and a good worker."

As he spoke he beckoned to a tall middle-aged mulatto who at once came over to us.

"And how is it that you speak English?" I asked.

"I am coming, señora, from the island of Providence, near to San Andrés." His inflection was the singsong of the British West Indies. "In our island we are speakin' English because in times past we were all British subjects, but now belongin' to Colombia."

"And you are here with no one who speaks your language?"

"I hov' learn the Sponish, señora."

The warden, although he did not understand English, had moved away as though he would leave the man free from any restraint.

"And are you at all content here?"

"The days pass. I hov' serve now nine years. We work eight hours; and half our pay they put by for us until we are coming out. . . . The food is plenty but not well prepared. No, the place is not too bad . . . not bad.

"When I enter I am bitter in my heart, señora. But I hov' think much, and I hov' come to know in myself—in myself—that it is right an' just. I know



that in myself. . . . But my twenty years! I hav' lost my twenty years! . . ."

We visited this prison again, "meester" inventing a small repair job for our English-speaking friend. Our second visit happened in the absence of the warden, but nothing was different: the prison was the same quiet place where men worked placidly at their tasks, undistinguished in dress from their keepers; a place where, because there was little resentment, there was time for repentance.

The coachman had volunteered the information that the man who was mending "meester's" plateholders was "Meester Thompson," who had killed a man in the island of Providence.

He mentioned the circumstance sympathetically, as though it were a regrettable misfortune rather than a crime; as in Butler's "Erewhon," where crime is a disease and disease a crime. The Erewhonians might ask, "How is your poor father's embezzlement?" But never would they allude to anything so disgraceful as a father's pneumonia!

"Yes," said the coachman, "Meester Thompson killed a man in Providence. But he has now very good conduct."

On our last visit to the prison I remained outside, while the "meester of the camera" went in to settle

his indebtedness with that other who, because he too spoke English, was also a "meester."

I was sitting, as I loved to do, with my note-book and pencil, letting the color and life of the streets creep into my pages, hardly realizing that I wrote, as well as gazed and listened and dreamed, and later almost surprised to find suggested in words, light and shadow and speech.

When I sat thus writing the *simpático* coachman also sat very quiet and refrained from his engaging banter with passersby.

I was, therefore, startled when he burst into sudden laughter.

"Look, señora!"

I had been for some time half aware that a distant phonograph played modern jazz; and, turning, I saw that to this rhythm a tiny naked child danced, his baby body responding to every syncopation. He danced in the sunlight before the doorway of a small fruit shop; and he danced with every atom of himself; not only with his arms and hands, his legs and feet, but with every muscle and nerve. Indeed, it was not so much that he danced in the sun as that he was the music, the music incarnated in a small body, warmly gold in the sun.

"He has danced like that," his mother said, "since he could walk. He cannot yet talk, though he under-

stands everything. But always when the phonograph plays he dances. He will dance again now if they put on another piece.

"His father," she exclaimed, "was French" . . . but he had gone away, and she never heard from him any more.

While we talked the windows of the prison filled with the convicts, who, attracted by the merry laughter of our coachman and by the music, had laid down their work and come to share the excitement.

And again the phonograph played and the child danced; up on his little toes, with his arms extended and his body quivering with every inflection of the rhythm.

The convicts crowding the windows laughed and forgot. . . . It did not matter that they looked through gratings; for so did most of the citizens of Cartagena, gratings being more associated with elegance than with jails. It mattered only that no commanding voice ordered them back to work, while they watched a child dance and forgot. . . .

Driving through streets, little by little grown as eloquent of the present as in the beginning they had been of the past, I listened to the conversing coachman; his conversation wafted back as we trotted and turned, out of one little street and into another.

"When they leave the prison," he remarked, "they all have a trade, and all have money. The prison has saved their money for them."

The coachman invariably spoke of money as silver . . . as *plata*; and the word "*plata*" is unctuously alluring.

"Yes, they have all silver, and a trade."

He did not seem to take into account any social stigma which might follow one like a sinister shadow from place to place, appearing even in one's death-notice if one were sufficiently important to have a death-notice.

". . . all silver and a trade." There was friendly congratulation in the words and in the tone.

Thus my revelation survived the test of the prison. . . .

When we drew up before the hotel the rocking-men had begun to assemble in the lobby. Again the life of the streets stopped on the threshold, pausing there, as that sunlit gentleness of the present which is born of the bitter past hesitates and trembles on the brink of that new thing which is the future.

For this is what was revealed in those streets of rose and blue; against the historic background of oppression there was everywhere a sense of forbearance; shown in the freeing of slaves at a time

when in the United States black men were still chattels; in the abolition fourteen years ago of the death penalty while we yet presume legally to take man's life; and shown in the soft voice in which, if you will listen, the streets themselves will speak to you. But even as they speak, men in hotel lobbies talk of development of capital and of return on investments; and there are strikes, and factory whistles, piercingly shrill. In the revelation of those streets there is always this pervading sense of change, imminent change, on the threshold of which trembles the reluctant present.

## CHAPTER VII

### NIGHT

**I**N the soft Cartagena night it is pleasant to wander through shadowy streets from which the warm pervasive dark has blotted out even the vivid rose and blue.

There had been some trouble with the public electric plant, and Cartagena was so dark that when strolling about its streets I again found the present hard to hold on to; it kept slipping away, as elusive as a dream, leaving the past to come once more into focus in its place; the past which peopled the streets with history and legend.

Through the open door of a tiny shop light would stream out into the street, and beyond the margin of its bright pool the darkness was accentuated, until when our eyes had forgotten light the darkness took on a luminosity of its own, showing in vague outline families congregated in windows, seeking a breeze. And I wondered what it would be like to live behind the window-bars of a little one-story house, with only a painted grating to separate me from the passing life of the streets.

Through "the place of the coaches" and out by way of the gate under the clock, we would wander over to the Plaza de la Independencia, there to saunter up and down between the gleaming marble busts of the martyrs; martyrs, who a century ago, met their death here, each victim accompanied by his priest.

"Many times I promised them pardon," wrote the captain-general of the royalists on the day before the execution of these patriots. "I opened and offered ways for their reconciliation . . . but deaf to my persuasions they boldly undertook resistance against the monarchy."

Yet now, because they thus scorned to save their lives, they live in the plaza which is outside the walls. And once a week the band plays and people gather to stroll, as we did, between the two rows of their pale busts.

Sometimes we would wander across to the market where by day sail-boats and canoes are moored, dugout canoes as primitive as that from which the legendary Rebolledo purchased his enchanted hens; and where, on Mondays, the weekly hydroplane from Barranquilla swoops down to alight among the sail-boats and canoes. A little further on, in front of the moving-picture theater, we would often pick up one of the carriages which stand waiting in the



LA POPA





splash of light outside the roofless and crumbling monastery which is the theater.

And then in a moment its light and its music would be left behind as the carriage trotted off into the darkness, headed for the suburb of Manga.

There are no street-lights in Manga. Fireflies make a brave and lovely attempt to take their place; fireflies sparkling in the dense dark foliage of banana, flamboyant and bougainvillea, which seems almost to smother the pretty villas. People walking about Manga do not, however, depend upon the fireflies.

A sudden flash in the dark will show that we are passing a pedestrian. These flashes of electric pocket-torches come and go, here and there in the night, each citizen, like each firefly, seeming equipped with his own private light-plant.

Although the roads of Manga are thus dark, the villas themselves, set far back under their heavy foliage, are as brilliantly lit as though they were hotels. Under the very heart of the glare, in the big halls which open through the houses, are circles of cane and scrollwork rocking-chairs. And there the great affectionate families of Colombia rock and talk, while outside in the silky dark frogs serenade and fireflies compete with electric pocket-torches.

I know that in the chairs under the lights they

are all there, all those family units whose Spanish equivalents I have so glibly at the end of my tongue.

As we drive up and down the streets of Manga under the dark rustling trees, we pass the charming Miramar Club with its roofless dancing pavilion built out over the water, and the tennis-courts and the Club la Popa. All this is new, all part of that insistent suggestion of coming change which, like a prophecy, saturates the air of Colombia.

In one of the handsome villas we looked one night upon a dance, the open architecture of the modern tropics frankly exhibiting the dance to any one who cared to look on. And it was evidently the fashion to look on; so much the fashion that stalls were set up in the street outside, ready to provide these on-lookers with refreshment: the gathered crowd forming, as it were, a party outside a party.

And the outer party seemed to have fully as merry a time as the one within; for the villa not only furnished orchestral music but provided also the spectacle of gay Parisian frocks dancing under a festive glare of light. These things the street party was free to enjoy, with no one commanding that they "move on."

The same night we came by chance upon another dance, this time in the poor quarter of the suburb

which is called El Pie de la Popa, because of its being at the foot of the hill of La Popa.

The house giving this second dance was small and close, in the old style of the Spanish tropics, with only a narrow door through which one might see the surging crowd dancing in stifling, unventilated heat.

Here, too, stands were set up in the street outside. There were tables provided with games, others with drinks, and one at which coffee and *empanadas* were to be served: each table lit by a more or less smoky kerosene lantern.

Watching the girl in charge of the refreshment-stall, I evolved a recipe for the making of *empanadas*.

You must first, if you would make a proper *empanada*, be young and brown and small; your black hair must be smoothly parted and coiled low in the style of a Madonna; in it you must have arranged clusters of fresh flowers; there must be little gold ear-rings in your ears and a gold chain with a charm around your neck—your neck which will, of course, be bronze. And you must wear a ruffled, flower-sprayed lawn frock which you have crisply laundered.

Otherwise you cannot make *empanadas* as I saw them made in the soft starry night in the street outside the dance.

As to equipment, you will have a bare wooden table on which smokes a lantern, and your table will be covered with rows of cups; for coffee must be served with *empanadas*. You will have beside you two charcoal fires, over one of which stands the five-gallon oil-tin in which the coffee has been brewed, and over the other the kettle of hot lard in which the *empanadas* are to be fried when you have them ready.

You will take from another oil-tin a small quantity of corn-meal dough, rolling it in your hands before you place it on the round, saucer-sized green leaf, where you must pat it thinly and evenly over the leaf, before sprinkling it with chopped and seasoned meat. Then, folding over the leaf, you will press it quite flat with quick firm pats of your hands, which, you remember, are small and brown.

And now when you remove the leaf there is a tart-shaped *empanada*, which you drop into the steaming lard.

While it fries you swiftly shape another, patting it with swift deft little pats, and spilling never a crumb of anything. One by one you thus prepare your *empanadas*; and when they have fried a golden brown, you fish them out of the lard with a big flat ladle.

You will work very rapidly, since you must be

ready to serve the guests when they come trooping out between dances; for in this poor quarter guests and the onlookers together purchase and consume their refreshments at lantern-lit stalls in the street.

That is how you make *empanadas* in the warm soft night under the sparkling sky. And if you are such a small brown creature as I describe you will raise the simple performance to a place among the arts.

"I must tell you how beautifully you do it," I said.

"Thanks, *mi señora*, but my work is no more than *regular*."

And every night at ten o'clock the big bell in Cartagena's cathedral booms, slow and heavy.

"Why does it ring?"

"The bell so rings because, in the days when enemies threatened, it was the custom at ten o'clock to close and lock the city gates. It will ring again at four in the morning, for then were the gates of the city opened."

"But now there are no longer enemies, and the gates are never closed."

"True, *señora*, but the bell still rings," your coachman will tell you. "It rings because it used to."

## CHAPTER VIII

### HAD FATE TURNED UP THE CARDS

**T**HREE hundred years ago the monk Paredes prayed in Bogotá, and praying heard the command, "Descend to Cartagena, and there found a convent of your order some distance from the town on a peak which you will see there."

Had Fate then, like a Gipsy, turned up the cards to predict this monk's future, she would have paused long, bending low over the cards and muttering to herself, "Yes, there is a vision and a voice."

By spluttering candle-light would she have dealt the cards: hearts and diamonds, spades—"The monk obeys the voice." Spades and clubs and diamonds—"There is a journey. The monk goes upon a journey. He climbs high mountains. He floats down a great river and tramps through jungle. The journey is weary, but he does not go alone. Two brother monks accompany him: Bartholomé de los Angeles and Miguel Santa María."

So the cards would have fallen; and in their falling Fate would have seen many months pass before Paredes would have reached at last the far city

where he was to found a convent of his order. She would have seen the three monks arrive at the walled city by the sea; three black-robed monks full of the tale of a vision, of a voice, and of an arduous journey. Many of the listeners who gathered to hear make offers of a site for this new monastery of the order of San Agustín: but the vision shows that the monastery must crown a peak outside the city walls.

Huddled in her shawl, Fate would have seen upon the cards such a peak, the peak which is called La Popa because it rises from the bay like the high-pooed ships which three hundred years ago sailed the uncharted seas.

Shivering in the cold of the high plateau of Bogotá, Fate would have dealt the cards, letting them flutter noiselessly from her hand to the table where they lay under the candle, kings and queens and knaves. . . . A vision and a journey; three stranger monks in a walled city by the sea; a hill like the stern of a caravel.

Kings and queens and knaves. Paredes, the monk, was to beware. For Fate would have seen evil on the cards.

“The evil is on the peak of La Popa. A demon possesses the peak . . . here and here and here, as the cards fall, for the demon appears in many



shapes; coming now in a cloud of mosquitos, so dense a cloud that the sun itself is hidden and none can live for their molesting. Again the demon comes in a tempest which uproots trees. He shakes the earth. He speaks in the voice of monkeys and the hiss of serpents.

"The cards are evil . . . evil. There is a hut on the summit of La Popa, where Indians worship the demon in the form of a goat. They worship and play upon instruments of shells. Paredes enters the hut, and the Indians flee before his anger. The goat he hurls over the precipice of the peak.

"Now the cards show money. The monk's hands are full of gold. Everywhere on the cards there is luck. With labor and gold the monastery rises brick by brick upon the summit. It stands there a fair white temple overlooking the sea. But Paredes is troubled, for there is no image of the Virgin in its chapel. The great ladies of Cartagena offer such images from their private oratorios, but none satisfy Paredes. He seeks an image with the eyes of a picture painted by Raphaelo Urbinas. In Bogotá Paredes has seen this picture, which is called 'The Beautiful Gardener.' Now, scourging himself, he prays to find an image with the eyes of this Lovely Gardener."

Shuffle and deal again: clubs and spades and the

queen of hearts; so would the cards have fallen had Fate turned Gipsy to foretell the future of Paredes.

"In the Street of the Dames," she would have continued, "Paredes passes with Bartholomé and Miguel. There is a lady on a balcony who calls: 'Pardon, padres, but I heard you were in search of a Virgin. I shall be glad to give you the one which is pictured in your imagination.'

"The monks enter. 'Show it,' they beg, but the lady who has come to the head of the stairs to meet them replies:

" 'That is not now possible, but if you will return upon the day which I set, you will find the image. Coming upon that day, you must enter, though the doors be closed. Enter, look through the rooms, and you will find your image.'

"The lady then goes into her room and closes the door. Outside the three monks remain long amazed, never moving until they are aroused by a distant bell.

" 'Brothers,' whispers Paredes. 'Brothers, know that the eyes of the lady are an exact copy—'

" 'Of what?'

" 'An exact copy of the eyes of the Beautiful Gardener.' "

Once more would Fate have shuffled and dealt: deuces and treys and aces.

“The three monks again enter the house of the lady in the Street of the Dames. They knock, but there is no answer. They open; the room is empty, even of furniture. They knock and enter a second room, where upon a small table they find a figure of the Virgin, a little figure not much more than two feet high, a little figure which seems to smile at them with a beatified sweetness. The three monks fall upon their knees. . . .”

Kings and knaves, treys and deuces.

“ ‘Brothers,’ Paredes is saying, ‘go out into the city to spread the tidings. I remain to worship.’ ”

Dealing and prophesying, Fate would have found the cards good. She would have seen that the people of Cartagena came to adore, bringing flowers from their gardens until every garden was bare and the Little Virgin of La Popa was buried under blossoms. Fate would then have seen her carried in procession to her shrine in the chapel of the monastery which crowns the peak which is outside the walls.

But did Fate wish a monk’s blessing, she would at this point have brought to an end her reading of the future. She would have prophesied no further than the flowery procession which bore the Little Virgin to her shrine on the summit.

Yet there would have remained in the hand of Fate one last card. . . .

In this story of La Popa and of the monk Paredes, tradition has long ago so fused fact and fancy that it is now impossible accurately to separate what is history from what is legend. But after all does it greatly matter? For are not legends the facts of the imagination, and are not the fancies of a people as essential a part of their spirit as are their deeds?

The legends of a country are its dreams, from which much of its character may be derived; as from the dreams of an individual the psychologist constructs the life-history of his patient. They are part of its quality, of the elusive thing we call personality.

With a knowledge of its traditions La Popa becomes something more than an eminence from which to gaze widely over sea and bay and tropic little city. With such memory of what has come and gone, one is aware, as one climbs, of an invisible world whose presence is nevertheless so keenly felt that the mere earthward flutter of a leaf seems to startle some lurking thing which is everywhere and yet nowhere. Fragments of sentences, words uttered centuries ago, seem on the verge of being spoken again. In just a moment, monk or pirate will step out of that invisible world to speak as he once spoke on the hill of La Popa; as though nothing ever truly

ceased to be, but waited always; dim in the gathering shadows, but nevertheless always there, waiting.

This climbing of La Popa is exacted of the visitor to Cartagena; for people who never thought of doing it themselves are sure to say, "Of course, you will climb La Popa."

With the passing of the days in Cartagena we had learned the idiosyncrasies of its climate; discovering that in the month of July, which is the short dry season between two rainy seasons, one feels more energetic after four o'clock in the afternoon than one does in the early morning. We found also that one becomes gradually accustomed to the heat, so that after a few days the prospect of ascending La Popa no longer seems an impossibly wilting undertaking.

Thus late one afternoon we left our carriage to follow on foot the old Spanish road, now fallen into disrepair but once a highway of some pretensions, built of porous gray-white stone with here and there the traces of what had evidently been drains.

The road passes under trees, frequently forgetting that it is a road and becoming no more than a scrambling rocky foot-path, and then, as though remembering its past, widening out into a highway. And as it climbs it pauses before an old shrine of the same coral-like rock which paves the road, but

the niche of the shrine stands empty save for a heap of small wooden crosses left there by the pious. The road pauses again before a great white cross, which is not old like the road and the shrine but an honor recently erected to Our Lady of La Popa.

Beyond this cross the vista of Cartagena appears and disappears, threaded in and out through the trees, as the road twists and winds.

And then quite suddenly there is the monastery, reached from the side of the hill which is furthest from the city.

There are low white one-story buildings, or guest-houses, designed to shelter the pilgrims who once came to the monastery, attracted by the fame of its miraculous little Virgin. One of these buildings now houses a negro caretaker who is also a watchman; perhaps entirely a watchman, since in truth little care seems to be taken; and the man's duties, we gather, consist in telephoning to the custom-house whenever he sights a vessel making for the harbor.

There is this watchman and his wife and the telephone, things alive and of the present in the midst of ruin and disintegration. For ruined and deserted is the monastery which, from its peak, dominates the little walled town, dominates the azure of the land-encircled harbor, dominates the surging frothy Caribbean green along the coast, dominating

even the distant sapphire depths of the horizon; dominant, although in its desertion startled bats fly in and out at the creaking of doors on rusty hinges, and at the sound of our footsteps on the stone flagging under the arches of the cloisters.

And upon the occasion of our visit, there was also a terrified snake which darted wildly hither and thither along the courtyard wall in frantic effort to escape.

"San Antonio!" cried the watchman's wife.

"Kill him! Kill him!" reiterated the urchin who was our companion and camera-bearer.

"San Antonio!"

"He is a snake supremely venomous," was the watchman's comment, when he held it up for inspection after life had been beaten from the swiftly darting body.

"*Fatal!*" echoed the woman.

Watchman and woman and child agreed that it was a most poisonous snake which had been killed, but none believed it to be anything more than a snake. Yet only three hundred years ago the monk Paredes would have seen in it a demon—perhaps Satanás himself; a demon who might have appeared the day before in a storm far out on the treacherous Caribbean, or in a black host of mosquitos. . . . The demon had a hundred guises.

But now, in the miracle of development of the human mind, a serpent has at last come to be only a serpent; to be greatly feared if venomous, but still only a serpent. The devil is not so important a person as he used to be.

Urchin and woman remained to exclaim over its lifeless body, "*Fatal!*" and "San Antonio!" while with heavy iron key the watchman let us into the chapel, quiet and deserted like the monastery and the houses of the pilgrims, but in striking contrast to their dilapidation, for here no doors sagged on hinges or were missing altogether. All was so neat and well kept that the desolation of the monastery seemed an incredible mistake. Surely if one stepped back through the door one would be in a well-ordered convent where monks in black-hooded robes walked up and down muttering over the rosaries which slipped bead by bead through their fingers!

On the altar of this neat chapel was a little doll of a Virgin, a tiny figure not much more than two feet high, a little wooden figure standing in an arched niche against a background of pale blue, and wearing a trailing white gown richly embroidered in gold.

The luster of this little Virgin's fame may never again be so bright as when the old buccaneer Dampier wrote that whatever misfortune came to the pirates hovering menacingly off the coast of



Colombia they attributed it to the intervention of this tiny image of La Popa. They would watch for the first glimpse of that hill which, from the sea, stood up like the stern of some colossal galleon, a galleon which had lost its masts: watching with fear lest the Virgin of La Popa send disaster upon the enemies who threatened her city.

Perhaps too, she will never equal the glory of that day, three hundred years ago, when Cartagena fell on its knees to implore deliverance from the pestilence which devastated it. What gifts they made her when the disease had subsided! There was a ring set with a rosette of nine emeralds, a cross of gold filigree, a veil of hammered gold, ear-rings of emeralds, a collar of gold set with pearls; and there were many garments of rich fabric.

But although the pinnacle of her fame seems past, there is the new cross gleaming white half-way up the hill; and every year, on February 2, Cartagena climbs La Popa in festive procession to light candles and say masses before its little Virgin of many miracles. It was at this very feast, which is called the feast of Candelaria, that the father of my small friend of the *bóvedas* had been wounded by a bull, not that he was a bull-fighter but merely "conducting the bull."

So because men have not forgotten her, the Little





TREES GROW FROM SEEPAGE HOLES IN THE MASONRY  
OF SAN FELIPE

Virgin may smile in her niche, although outside the chapel bats flutter in the shadows of a deserted monastery; and vultures make their headquarters upon the crest of the precipice which tradition calls the Leap of the Goat, because from there Paredes cast the unfortunate animal which he had discovered being worshiped by Indians.

Seeking light and air, after the cloistered gloom, I left the monastery by a side door, coming like a sudden apparition upon scores of somber birds perching on the edge of the cliff: birds which took instant and noiseless flight, dumbly hurling themselves into the abyss, leaving me alone upon the summit trodden bare by their feet.

Here La Popa drops sheer to the sea-level plain. To the left a single-track railroad line wanders off through marshes. To the right rises the old fortress of San Felipe. Below the vultures circle and soar.

One by one familiar haunts are identified: there is Pie de La Popa, shown in rectangles of thatch and tile; and beyond is the smiling island of Manga with the roofs of the villas standing up like rocks from a sea of foliage; and farther off is Cartagena, seen in a pastel haze from which emerge the towers and domes of its churches. And there is the opal bay across whose translucent surface the trade-wind

drives white-sailed boats, with far off the Boca Chica between whose fortresses our steamer had sailed into the waiting wonder. And beyond . . . beyond is the restless sea and the quiet horizon.

For three centuries the Convent of La Popa has looked out upon this scene. "Passed," as the old books say, "passed the years"; and in their passing monk and pirate, monarchist and revolutionist by turns occupied La Popa. Vernon and Pointis, Morillo and Bolívar, all at one time or another made it their stronghold. Cannon had replaced bells as silence now replaces cannon; until at last there are only the bats and the vultures, and perhaps a lurking serpent, and the noise of wind swinging doors on rusty hinges.

But it is rumored that on the night of the Faithful Dead a ghostly funeral service is held in the monastery; the funeral of a monk who three hundred years ago prayed in Bogotá, and, praying, saw a vision; the phantom funeral of a monk who, having obeyed the voice of his vision, founding upon the peak outside the walls of a far city a convent of his order, went out with zeal to convert neighboring Indians; the funeral of a monk whom the Indians murdered, burning his body, but returning his head to the convent he had built; the ghostly funeral then of the ghostly head of a murdered monk.

It is this card which Fate, had she turned sooth-sayer, would not have dealt in the cold forgotten candle-light. She would never have said to Paredes: "I see here, upon this last card, a funeral procession pass through the deserted cloisters of a monastery which falls into ruins. They pass to bury the bodiless head of a monk, and the head is the head of Paredes."

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## CHAPTER IX

### THREE ENDINGS AND A BEGINNING

**T**HE coachman had frequently asked, "And what day will you visit San Felipe?"

San Felipe must be visited because, even more than the walls, it bears witness to the power which was Spain, that power of which the man of mixed race is at once proud and resentful.

Standing in the sentry-box which crowns this old fortress, it is easy to comprehend, and even to share, both the pride and the resentment; for the magnitude of the work is as great as was the tyranny of its execution.

In our scramble up through a tangle of vicious thorny shrubs, we explored as we climbed; following to their abrupt mysterious ends the tunnels with which the hill is riddled; tunnels into which deep shafts let light and air from above, and through which escape might be made by means of ladders. But it is standing in the sentry-box on the summit that the immensity of the undertaking is realized.

Thus long ago did a Spanish soldier's eye sweep

the panorama of city and bay: the harbor with its large mouth filled in to prohibit the passing of ships, and the narrow entrance of the Boca Chica over which the forts of San Fernando and San José stood guard. His roving gaze would have paused complacent on the inner forts before it passed on to the encircling walls which protected the city; dwelling long upon the bastion of the *bóvedas* where the wall was strongest because at all costs the reservoir must be defended. If enemies had landed forces farther down the coast the guns of that bastion could have mowed them down as they approached the along the beach of Cabrero. His gaze must have lingered there confidently before it passed on to the wall back of the Church of San Pedro Claver, where more guns menaced any landing on the beach.

Against foes arriving from the interior, Cartagena relied upon the cannon of San Felipe, and it was therefore the slope of the fortress turned away from the city which was the most powerfully fortified; heavy masonry covering the slope, sentry-boxes facing all directions, and tunnels perforating the hill.

But all disintegrates; trees and shrubs grow from seepage holes in the masonry, while time and weather slowly obliterate from the cannon the crown of Spain. San Felipe is even more desolate than La



Popa; for here there is not even the negro watchman and his telephone; there are only astonished little goats leaping perilously about on the precipitous masonry walls.

And upon another day we visited San Fernando; for among the pleasant results of our finally presented letters of introduction was the use of a launch which would take us to the Boca Chica, twelve miles away.

So it came about that we passed under the arch of the old painted water-gate where little green shrubs grow out of crevices in the buff and blue and rose. But we no longer felt grotesquely out of proportion as when sailing on a Fruit steamer we had dwarfed its once-imposing forts: for we now fell into the picture as human beings, minus the exaggerated prestige of modern invention. Passing in thus, we found ourselves in scale with the sixteenth century: the fort no longer impressing us as a fascinating toy, but as a real fort with a forty-foot-thick wall surrounding an almost circular courtyard; a wall punctuated by doors leading into vaulted chambers; connecting chambers through which it is possible to make an inner circuit of the fort.

On the top of the walls we walked inside an inclosing parapet, stopping at intervals to look

through the empty embrasures where cannon once swept land and sea, and mounting the little steps beside these embrasures as men long ago mounted them, stationed there to report whether the aim of the guns were true, and what was the resulting damage to the foe. We gazed thus out to sea, across the Boca Chica to the crumbling fortress of San José, or over a deep moat to the green outstretched arm of the land.

And while we explored the sun beat down hot, hot, paling even the blue of the sky. But we had grown so accustomed to Cartagena's sun that regardless of its fierce glare we made many times the circuit of these walls of San Fernando.

The bay was full of quivering color; mauve along the shore, clear sea-green farther out; with here and there deep mulberry cloud-shadows resting on the water. An Indian, standing while he paddled his canoe, glided silently from the bay into the moat, gliding so quietly that only a hurrying tribe of tiny black and tan fish gave warning of his coming.

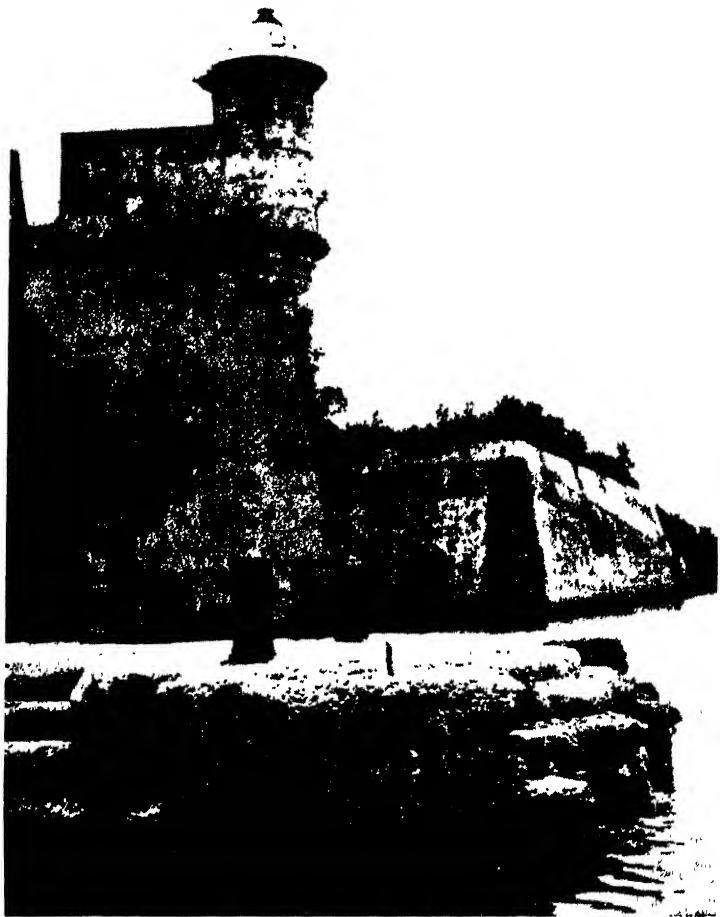
A modern lighthouse rises from one end of the wall, while in the deep shady entrance beyond the water-gate three or four mulatto men were dozing in the heat: but the fort, in the very essence of its personality, ignored the lighthouse and the drowsy

men; concerning itself only with memories; refighting old battles, heroically triumphant or equally heroically vanquished; recalling perhaps as its dearest memory, not one of the victories but a defeat; going back to the year 1697 when the combined fleets of the pirates Pointis and Morgan took and sacked the city.

Surely the memory of a little fort would love to dwell upon the overwhelming majority of that attacking force whose combatants were numbered in thousands, and memory would smile proudly upon its little company of sixty-eight under the command of Don Sancho Jimeno. It would hear again the messenger sent by Pointis demanding surrender, and again hear the ringing answer which echoed in the fort, "Say to the Señor Baron de Pointis that he is at liberty to take the fort by those methods worthy of gentlemen."

The fort would certainly not forget that when Don Sancho directed the resistance from the parapet his wife stood at his side.

Of course in the tradition this brave Spanish lady was beautiful; for how else, three hundred years ago, could a lady have been heroic? Therefore, the fort loves to remember her beautiful, as she stood upon the parapet with the fire of battle about her. Certainly she was beautiful.



WHERE DON SANCIO DEFIED POINTIS



The fort recollects also the following dawn when forces from the land swarmed up ladders to scale its walls, remembering how its cannon struck them down, and the courage with which the enemy pressed on until by sheer force of numbers they had overcome resistance.

And if the old fort could puff at the pipe of reminiscence like a garrulous veteran in a chimney-corner, it would impart the speech of tradition; for it would remember the very intonation of the words in which the victorious Pointis haughtily addressed himself to Don Sancho as he stood waiting with his Castilian lady by his side.

"You are my prisoner. Hand over your sword."

But Don Sancho's sword, the fort would remember, lay broken on the ground.

"And where is the garrison?"

"We were sixty-eight, señor, but there remain but twenty of us in condition to serve."

"Sixty-eight! With such a number you dared resist me?"

"Señor Baron, the doing of one's duty does not depend upon the number of one's enemies."

And there in the white, hot light, with the glittering bay on one side and the sea upon the other, Pointis, unbuckled his sword and presented it to

Don Sancho. "At your side, señor, it will be more greatly honored than it has ever been before."

As for the brave lovely lady, of course the French pirate fell upon his knees to kiss her hand.

With such fine dreams the little fort of San Fernando sleeps in the sun, oblivious of the presence of a new lighthouse and of mulatto men lounging in its entrance.

It dreams and, while it dreams, falls ever so slowly into ruin. In the courtyard, from the walls, wherever it can find foothold, a little green shrub has sprung up, about whose small white flowers many butterflies hover, languid in the sun; orange and brown and yellow; or white with sharp black edges, as though they might have been mourning-cards lamenting the passing of ancient splendors.

When we spoke our voices echoed and reëchoed across the walls and in the dark deserted vaults, foul with the odor of countless bats, whose high shrill squeaks also echoed and reëchoed.

But nothing woke the slumbering fort which dreamed of the vanished glory of an ended era.

If you say to your coachman that you want to visit the *cacimbas*, he will understand, and he will drive you out past the dock, west along the arm of land which leads to the Boca Grande, until you come

to the little thatched settlement where women dig holes in the sand for water, calling such holes *cacimbas*.

It is so tiny a village that it has neither church nor shop; so small that it does not pay the waterman to jog out from the city with his gaily painted water-barrel. And since there are no fresh-water streams on the arm which has thrown itself out around the bay, the women must dig in the sand for water.

The little cluster of huts owe their existence to fish; on the left where the salt water of the bay ripples and gurgles fishing boats are drawn up along the shore, and on the right the Caribbean rolls in and breaks, rolls in and breaks, breaking on the hot beach. In these waters is an everlasting supply of fish to satisfy the everlasting demand of Cartagena where year after year fish appears twice a day on the menu. And so the little huts of men sprang up to be near the fish.

On the morning when we went to see what *cacimbas* were like, the palms hung limp leaves over the huts as though they waited for a breeze to come and turn them to fans; and out of the huts poured the population to see what we were like.

We were interested in the *cacimbas*, the coachman explained, and "meester" would like to photograph



them. There was a general laugh, and the little naked, round-eyed children drew nearer, forgetting their shyness. Here was an adventure, a "meester" coming in a carriage to photograph *cacimbas*!

Thus in a body we inspected a *cacimba*, and the woman who had been digging when we arrived went obligingly back to her work to show us how it was done.

She shoveled with a scoop made of half of a large round gourd, throwing up the earth about her until, like an ant-lion, she stood at the bottom of an inverted cone, throwing up gourdful after gourdful until she was shoulder deep.

Meanwhile the saucer-eyed statuettes of children had lost all sense of strangeness and hovered close about us. And the men, powerful brown men in cotton trousers rolled up above their knees—the men were amused. So were the barefoot calico-frocked women with their babies in their arms, tiny naked babies; all just as they might have been a hundred years ago, save for the fact that the cloth of their garments was now machine-woven.

And then the woman in the *cacimba* stopped digging to exclaim: "*Mire!* here is the water!" With the gourd which was her recent shovel she dipped from the bubbling apex where she stood. "See," she said, "water, most pure and clear!" She spoke

with affectionate wonder; her very tone seeming to bless it for bubbling at the bottom of the cone which she had so patiently excavated with only her gourd for a shovel.

When we returned to the carriage we found that the village had brought out to see us its last inhabitant. Held up between two young women something moved, an emaciated something which had once been woman. It moved slowly, stiffly, the two young women supporting it on either side. It stepped jerkily, as a mechanical toy steps when it is so nearly run down that there is scarcely force left to move it. Thus the figure approached, rigid and groping, with on its face no fleeting phantom of expression.

"She is ninety-eight years old," I heard the coachman explaining; and while I looked upon those ninety-eight years of living in a thatched hut, of sleeping on a mat and of digging in the sand for water, ninety-eight years of being a primitive woman, I wondered about Colombia in that distant time, when she who moved with such brittle effort had come into the world a soft, flaccid being.

A century ago . . . I slowly realized . . . Colombia had but just won her independence from Spain . . . and there was no more Inquisition . . . There was even talk of freeing slaves. And while this old

woman was a child, learning to walk, as softly unsteady then as she was now rigidly uncertain, men had been fighting; Colombian shedding the blood of Colombian to decide whether federation or centralization of power were the better form of government. And when she was old enough to frolic in the waves, the Union of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador was disrupted, and Bolívar, the liberator, broken in heart and body, had come to Cartagena, to pass a month in a little house at the foot of La Popa, before he went on to Santa Marta to die. And while she helped her mother to dig *cacimbas*, out in the great world miraculous dreams of steamship and locomotive were coming true.

Gradually these inventions found their way to Colombia. There was a day when the first steam-vessel entered the harbor of Cartagena; when the railroad came to connect the city with the Magdalena River; and when matches appeared and sewing-machines and electric lights, automobiles and telephones. One by one these discoveries of the great inventive nineteenth and twentieth centuries reached Cartagena. But the groping old woman, who slowly becomes a skeleton while she yet lives, has probably thought little of all those inventions; for the primitive mind, like the child mind, does not discriminate, finding all things equally new and equally

strange. And after all, if one did not travel on steamships and if any little naked child served to carry one's messages, why were such inventions important?

Therefore, as the girl became a woman, it was her man, and one by one her children, that were truly important and wonderful to her. Of course it was also important and much to be marveled at that slaves were freed; that the sea never failed to supply fish, or the *cacimbas* water, if one dug deep enough.

Now, as she tottered with painful effort, did any of the warm past live in her old heart? Or had the children of her flesh grown vague; as vague as grandchildren; as removed as great-grandchildren? Was even the dear young past now dim, dim like the present, so that to recall it her mind moved stiffly, uncertainly, as did her legs when she tried to walk?

Watching this woman, who seemed incredibly older than Colombia itself, nothing seemed to matter that did not touch and alter the facts of illness and age and death.

And I heard the coachman saying, with the familiar pointing gesture of his whip, "On that little island . . . yonder . . . just a few yards from the shore . . . an aëroplane was wrecked two years ago."

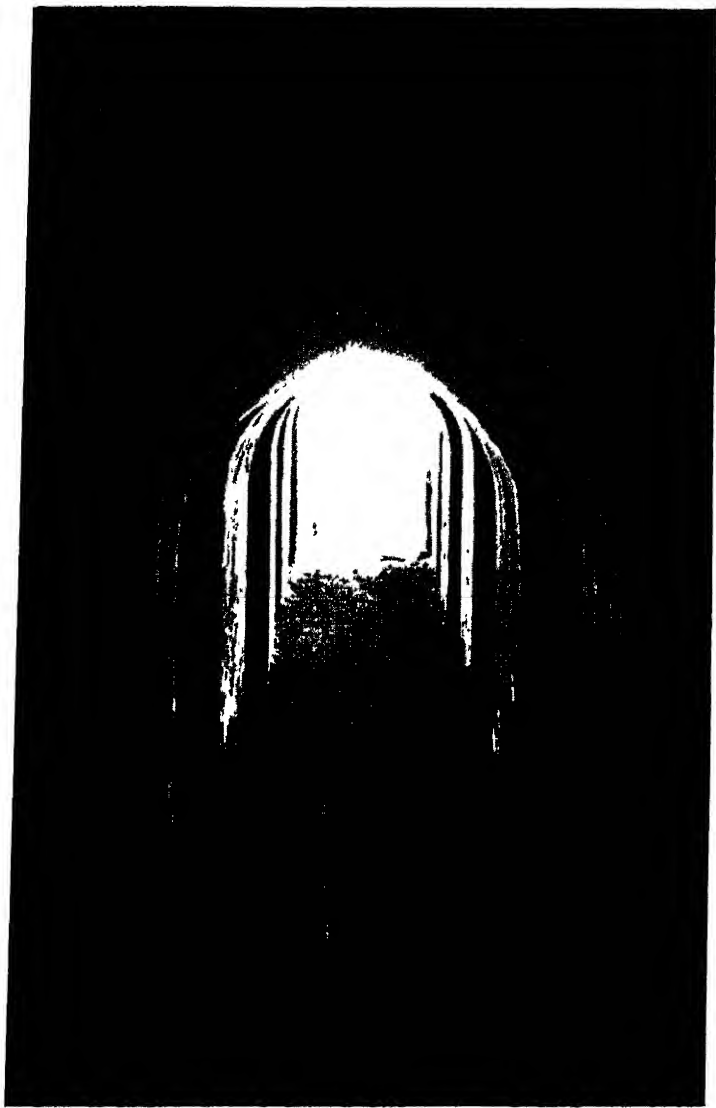
I remembered having been told something about the unlucky collapse of the first attempt to establish a Cartagena-Barranquilla air service. What a climax to her ninety-eight years to have an aëroplane smashed almost at the door of that old woman's hut!

"Yes, *mi señora*," the coachman continued, "yes, the plane fell among those trees. It carried two passengers. The aviator and one of the passengers were killed, and the other so badly injured that they thought for six months he'd die. They had to amputate a leg; but they took him to Panama and gave him a silver leg. . . . Now he can dance."

Thus the coachman put into concrete form the sum of my thoughts. "Now he can dance." And that is the miracle for which we cry: we want our hearts to dance.

There was a crescent moon in the sky, hanging there like a silver bow which has shot the night full of stars, silver to match itself. And we sat upon the wall of Cartagena enjoying the cool night wind which brought with it drifting fragments of memory, of things read and things seen. The wind blew these memories about as it blows the autumn leaves which it has shaken from the tree.

There was the memory of the priest Pedro Claver who pleased his God by denying himself the view



BENEATH THE FORTRESS OF SAN FELIPE



from the wall and the refreshment of the breeze; there was the old woman of the *cacimbas* and the sense of ending which she typified; and there was a vague something, new, not yet taken definite form, an invisible something blowing in the wind . . . the future blowing in the wind.

While we sat swinging our feet, a barefoot father came bringing his little son, lifting him to stand on the parapet; and standing thus his baby gaze was on a level with mine, so that I saw with his young eyes.

We looked out upon the dark profundity of the sea.

"*Agua*," said the father, indicating the water, and, "*Agua*," repeated the sweet flute of the little voice.

The water lay at our feet as still as painted water, and upon it the child saw no outline of full-rigged slave-ship, with dark masts and swelling sails and far-off glimmer of light; no ship in whose hold a terrified cargo moaned that the white man would make gunpowder from their bones.

"*Agua*," the treble voice reiterated, as though to fasten the word to the mysterious beauty of the thing.

The brilliant sky hung low over the water, compelling attention.



"*La luna*," the father addressed the lovely wonder of the moon.

"*La luna*," the child echoed like some trusting night-bird.

Behind us, the lighthouse on the wall made an ambitious start skyward and then went no further than the brave flare of its own light.

"*El faro*," the father explained, and "*Faro*," the child murmured, staring up with marveling eyes.

Water and moon and lighthouse . . . the world was a strangely glorious place to a little new thing, a beginning thing; beginning where the old woman left off, and going on into the pearly mist which is the future.

## CHAPTER X

### BY SEA-SLED

IN obedience to instructions we and our possessions appeared on the dock promptly at six o'clock in the morning. There a crowd had gathered, for the sea-sled was a novelty.

It had been shipped from the United States and was now proceeding to the upper Magdalena River, where a sea-sled service was to be initiated between Girardot and Beltrán, with the hope of reducing by some hours the distance between those two points. And we were to be its first passengers, going as far as Calamar, and there transferring to the first down-river boat.

The sea-sled was most alluring to look at. Its white paint glistened, spotless and new, in the early sun. Its wicker arm-chairs invited. Its curious shape, a thirty-five-foot motor-launch on runners, promised a thrill. And its name was *Paz*.

"Meester" and I were fascinated at the idea of traveling on so modern a craft through the Dique, famous as a waterway in the days of Philip II of Spain.

This Dique is a natural channel connecting the Magdalena River with the sea a few miles beyond Cartagena. And the Magdalena has been from the beginning the great artery of transportation in Colombia. When Cartagena was the Queen of the Indies and Spain was spending great sums in its fortification, the Dique had been dredged and kept open for traffic. But with the gradual shifting of commerce from Cartagena to Barranquilla the old waterway was neglected until its channel became so choked with the silt of the Magdalena that it is no longer adequate for boats of any but the most modest tonnage.

And now we were to follow this old Dique in the speediest of twentieth-century motor-boats, and we were to make the ninety-six miles between Cartagena and Calamar in three and a half hours!

Of course we were in luck. But when would we start?

The two young Colombians who were financially involved in this enterprise of sea-sled service on the upper river soon appeared, also with a discouraging amount of luggage. And with them came one more passenger, a North American, owner of one of the great ranches of the lower river. After much adjustment and much animated argument on the part of our various porters, our possessions were at last

stowed away in the stern, and we were ready. The mounting sun beat down upon the shadeless dock. When would we leave?

Oh, the Jamaican engineer had been visited by the bright idea of changing the wiring of the electric starter. It was useless to question him, for he announced irritably that he was extremely nervous and must be let alone.

The occasion demanded patience; and did not the very name of the sea-sled counsel peace? And while we were practising both those admirable virtues, the engineer slipped away. He had left everything and gone calmly home to breakfast!

We ate *mamones*, the least substantial of fruits, and exercised our virtues.

When at last we actually did leave, it was nine by the clock in the tower on the wall, but in the dash and verve of our departure we were repaid for the tedium of waiting three unnecessary hours on a sun-baked dock.

The speed of the powerful engines lifted the boat until she glided over the water on her two long runners; and as she glided she threw up in her wake a ten-foot fountain of foaming spray. And a shout of good luck and farewell went up from the assembled crowd as we sped off down the bay.

We settled back in the wicker chairs with the

sense of having become part of an experiment; one of Colombia's many experiments in the solving of that vast and baffling problem of transportation which in all the Andean countries is in slow process of solution.

With the sea-sled Colombia would attempt to master the rapid current of the upper Magdalena. Thus the interest of participating in such an experiment was added to the exhilaration of coasting over the glassy harbor, our runners touching the surface so lightly that it would not have been surprising had they left it altogether.

When we passed from the oily smooth bay out into the open wave-roughened Caribbean, the water changed from blue to green, and when we entered the *caño* leading to the great marshy lake which the Colombians call a *ciénaga*, it became coppery brown, and once more tranquil; so that we skimmed again smoothly, gliding between banks of the intense green of the tropics, hurrying along at the rate of thirty miles an hour, creating as we hurried, our own joyful breeze.

Suddenly a fish some twelve inches long rose from the sunlit copper surface; a fish of the brilliant glistening blue of the watchful kingfishers which perched on overhanging branches. This gorgeous fish it seemed would race with the sea-sled

*Paz*. Very well, the *Paz* accepted the challenge. At top speed it rushed over the water, with amber spray flying high in its wake.

For nearly two hundred feet it thus raced with a spangled blue fish. At intervals the fish touched the water, became recharged with momentum, and rose to fly low. And always the fish gained upon the sea-sled, until finally, some distance ahead of us, it darted below the surface and did not reappear; as though, its point proved, it did not need to rise again.

As we rushed along, throwing up that high cascade of spray, the little thatched villages of the *caño* cried out first in excitement and wonder and then in alarm, as the waves of our wake washed away the banks and upset or filled the canoes moored there. Such was the devastation of our mad progress through the *caño* that we convinced the nervous engineer that we absolutely must slow down in passing villages.

When we entered the great marshy *ciénaga* we slackened our pace on our own account, for it was necessary to locate the entrance to the Dique, a difficult matter in a great vague marsh with scores of bays and arms and inlets which promised anything and led to nothing; a marsh where masses of water-hyacinth floated like blue flowering islets.

We tried first one opening and then another, but all were disappointingly not the entrance to the Dique. It became more and more difficult to avoid the patches of hyacinth, until at last we were plowing our slow way through dense clogging masses of them. And still our pilot insisted that we had only to go on a little farther in order to reach the open channel of the Dique. So we continued to chug through hyacinths, until we could no longer force our way forward. Ahead was a solid floating meadow; behind us the discouraging masses through which the panting engines had fought a passage. The Colombian owners began to pole back toward open water; poling painfully against the choking mass, poling with a furious sun beating down upon their exertion.

At that disheartening moment a native canoe shot out from one of the inlets, pausing to regard with surprise our struggle. Yes, the canoe would wait; it would guide us to the entrance.

At last in the Dique we proceeded along a well-defined waterway between intimate green banks which formed the horizon of a world of birds; squawking crested screamers, snake-birds, huge white herons, giant blue kingfishers, lesser herons and pygmy kingfishers, lapwings and grackles; black and white marsh flycatchers, and exquisite jacanas

with fluttering yellow wings; miles of them, all with an air of having put on their most gala raiment and their most festive mood, to come to the Dique that they might watch the passing of a sea-sled.

But all was not well with the sea-sled. That experience in the *ciénaga* had been something altogether outside the reckoning of the manufacturers of sea-sleds, who had not designed the propellers to digest water-hyacinths. The clutch of one of the two engines was slipping; and when it slipped there was a horrid grinding noise, while at the same time the boat was forced suddenly to the right. The engineer would then quickly throw out the other clutch in an attempt to restore the boat's equilibrium. We thus progressed by a series of intoxicated lurches; we were no longer in the running with gorgeous blue flying fish which know no "engine-trouble."

With each ghastly grinding the Colombians had a look of anguish, for they had twenty-eight thousand dollars at stake in that sea-sled, whose engines appeared to be in mortal agony.

It soon became evident that we could go no farther without tightening the slipping clutch, and we tied up for repairs at the wharf of the great sugar plantation of Sincerín.

There, in the breathless heat of noon, we drank iced tea from thermos bottles and partook of sar-



dines and crackers, bananas and cakes of sweet chocolate, which we had not really expected to use, since we were to have lunched in Calamar.

After lunch "meester" took some pictures while the rancher and I explored.

There was only the wharf, one hut of thatch, and a single line of rails leading into the sugar plantation a mile away. It would have been interesting to visit this plantation, for it is the largest in the republic. But at any moment the sled might be ready to start, and no one dared inquire of the high-strung engineer whether there was time for an excursion.

And since there was nothing further to explore we sought the shade of a gourd-tree where we stood flicking at mosquitos with our handkerchiefs, until, inferring by methods of deduction that work on the clutch had ceased and that all hands were engaged in a united and repeated effort to start the engine, we returned to our places in the once proud wicker chairs. Then when it seemed certain that the boat would never move again, we were suddenly off, breathing once more deeply of the reviving breeze of our own manufacture.

Again we stopped; and again there was that hot sound of hammering; and again it was silently agreed not to question the temperamental engineer.

Once more we started, and once more the sweet breeze blew away the heat. We followed the lovely winding way of the Dique as far as Sopla Viento. "The rudder must be repaired," condescended the engineer before he became dumb under the protection of another orgy of hammering.

The inhabitants of the village gathered on the bank, assorted mulattoes of assorted ages, male and female according to creation. The air was hot and motionless, in spite of the fact that *sopla* means blow and *viento* means wind. "Meester" investigated the hammering and reported that the handle of a frying-pan was being added to the rudder-gear, which he found to have been made of the flimsiest soft pine.

Certainly the trials of the pioneer are great. He is the victim of countless unforeseen difficulties; of climate, of negligence and of stupidity; through all of which he must preserve his vision and his courage.

This experience on the sea-sled was but a small, a very small concrete example of the sort of thing that happens in the development of a new country. But it showed the Colombian in the character of pioneer, a phase of the South American which I have never seen described.

Throughout that day, which must have been so

anxious for the owners, our admiration for them had mounted with the thermometer. For they were resourceful; energetic; patient; solicitous always for the comfort of us, their passengers; and, mightiest of all victories, refraining from saying all that might with justice have been said; saying just enough to prove themselves human, but not one word more.

After an hour of hammering, during which the population of comatose Sopla Viento lost interest and drifted away, we once more set forth, destined for Calamar. The hour was half-past five; we were to have reached Calamar at half-past nine.

The hosts of birds which had disappeared during the heated hours now came back; noisy screamers, fluttering jacanas, statuesque herons, swooping kingfishers; all in a preoccupied mood, as though there were much to be accomplished before nightfall.

And night fell swiftly. The banana-groves, the giant rushes, and the mango-trees, dripping with fruit, lost color and detail, becoming dark indistinct masses past which we sped; for once more we were actually speeding; not quite the reckless boat which in the morning had skimmed over the blue sheen of Cartagena's bay and out into the green sea; but a motor-boat, still sufficiently swift to create a sensation as it passed.

In this more populous part of the Dique there was much traffic in canoes, propelled by paddles shaped like the broad leaves of the water-lilies which grew all about us; canoes loaded with wood, with charcoal, with gourds, mangos, and bananas. Occasionally the flames of supper fires flared in the canoes and were reflected on the dark mirror of the water.

Always we were followed by excited cries as our wake tossed and threatened to swamp these tiny primitive craft.

We were passing frequent thatched settlements whose population ran down to the banks with torches held high to see what this was which rushed in the darkness through the Dique.

Turkish fashion we sat in the bow while belated birds dashed by; and a crescent moon rose, that moon which the night before we had watched from the ancient wall of Cartagena, while a child's voice trilled, "*La luna.*" Ahead in the abyss of the night there was constant far-off lightning, flashing like some vast elemental code; thin forked lightning on the left answered by zigzag lightning on the right; strange answering lightning with brief pauses between flashes as though the reply were carefully considered; cloud answering cloud.

With the shutting down of night our speed had

been necessarily abated, for lightning and fireflies and high silver crescent did not do much to illumine the dark way of the Dique.

In this dim quiet night it was startling to come upon a big electric-lit dredge and to realize that here again was the new; the insistent prophecy of the future, of change everywhere imminent.

A contract had just been let by the Colombian Government to a North American firm to dredge and keep open the Dique. And Cartagena was predicting that with the clearing of the channel much of the Magdalena River tonnage would be diverted from Barranquilla to Cartagena; while Barranquilla retorted with plans to dredge the bar across the mouth of the Magdalena, so that ships might dock at the city itself, instead of at Puerto Colombia, and thus avoid the costly and tedious transfer from ship to railroad.

Passing the great flaring dredge of new enterprise, we went on again in the firefly-lit dark, with ahead lightning answering lightning.

And then we came suddenly and dramatically into the Magdalena. It stretched broad and dark and wide, across to its opposite bank, and from its swift glimmering current rose the clustered lights of a river-boat whose glow was reflected in soft luminous blur.

“Calamar! See there on your right is Calamar!” cried the sea-sled owners. “Calamar at last!”

It was just twelve hours since we had sailed with triumphant shower of spray from the dock of Cartagena, scheduled to reach Calamar in three hours and a half.

“Calamar!” We rose stiffly from our cross-legged dream in the bow. Then our part in the sea-sled experiment was over.

And there were the shouts of porters getting our luggage from the boat to the shore, and our own farewells.

“Good-by.”

“We’ll see you later . . . on the upper river!”

“Good-by.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BACK WAY TO SANTA MARTA

**M**OST travelers approach Santa Marta by its front door, sailing into its vivid little bay and docking at the imposing wharf of the Fruit Company; for few know of the existence of the delightful back way, through the *caños* and marshes of the Magdalena delta.

To follow this back way the point of departure is Barranquilla. Indeed, for the traveler Barranquilla exists solely as a place from which he proceeds somewhere else.

It was in Barranquilla, therefore, that we waited, having come down from Calamar by river-boat. We waited because we refused to go through the delta at night, for where would be the advantage of the devious back way unless we traversed it by day. And as day boats were infrequent, we waited.

Meanwhile we saw Barranquilla as something more than a starting-point. We assimilated the fact that it is the principal port on the Magdalena River and that, although it is seventeen miles by rail from the seaport at Puerto Colombia, yet half the foreign

commerce of the country passes through it. We found it a stirring ambitious place, with factories for the making of bricks and soap, candles and shoes, matches and chocolate, and with important textile mills and tanneries.

We motored with friends along the wide asphalt boulevard of a new residential district where handsome villas are springing up, the whole development admirably planned and constructed under the direction of a North American who has lived long in Colombia. We inspected a new hospital in process of building and rejoiced with our Barranquilla friends over the site of a prospective golf-course.

We visited the business quarter of the city and acquired much information, that most of the foreigners in trade in Colombia are Syrians, with small British, German, Italian, and North American groups in the larger towns. We learned that so many tramps drift down to the north coast of Colombia that permanent signs are displayed in the Barranquilla banks announcing that *andarines* are not received. And what in the world are *andarines*? Tramps, of course, for does not the verb *andar* mean to walk?

Thus instructively was our time spent in Barranquilla. But looking back I find myself ignoring tanneries and factories, and remembering the dust,



and the Pensión Inglesa, and the coming of the rain. It was August, and it had not rained in Barranquilla since October. "It really should be raining a little now," we were told. "But often it does not rain from one October to another."

"And can you always be sure of October?"

"Oh, yes, it really rains then; why, horses have been known to drown in the streets."

But at the time of our visit it had not rained for almost a year, and in the city the dust was inches deep; thick dust as smooth and fine as flour. The high two-horse surreys and the motors stirred it up in choking clouds, and the ambling little donkeys kicked up suffocating quantities. Even at the Pensión Inglesa, on the slope back of the town, there was dust.

The Pensión stands in a garden well back from the street; and dust lies thick on the red and yellow cannas of the garden; it veils the variegated crotons, dims the purple glory of the bougainvillea, and ages the palms. It powders the horses of the surreys which trot up the driveway of the Pensión, until they all become gray horses with gray manes. That horse of rumor which was thus dust-choked for eleven months of the year, only to be drowned in the streets on the twelfth month, must indeed have died a pessimist's death.

But the Pensión which stands in the thirsty garden is a place of comfort and of peace. Its open structure adapts it so perfectly to the tropics that it is difficult to believe in the heat of Barranquilla. The suites of rooms open straight through from sunrise to sunset; for the front balcony, upon which the bedrooms give, faces east, while the baths and little breakfast-rooms look over fragrant white-flowering trees to the west.

If there was even a whisper of a breeze, it was ours, and the bare simplicity of the place was so clean and quiet that of course we were right in thinking it cool. Yet at noon, as we sat in the veranda dining-room, the light was hot and white on the tennis-courts outside. In its intensity it so suggested India that I half expected the shrill monotony of the brain-fever bird to break the stillness. Such is my memory of the oasis of the Pensión, created by an Englishwoman as a haven for the wayfarer.

There was thus the Pensión and the dust, and then there was the coming of the rain.

It came upon the morning of our departure. There was thunder and lightning and a black menacing sky as we drove through dust to the little steamboat *Cortissoz*. But no one believed in the rain, all affecting to scorn the threatening symptoms. The

friends who came to see us off shrugged their shoulders. It sometimes behaved like this, they said, but with no result beyond a few reluctant drops: although it might be raining heavily twenty miles inland, Barranquilla would be disappointed by just such false promises.

Our fellow-passengers were equally skeptical, having provided themselves with no sort of protection against possible rain. To them the journey was an occasion, in honor of which they wore organdies and silks, with bands of ribbon in their hair, great strings of imitation pearls around their necks, and tortoise-shell bracelets on their brown arms.

And then the drops began to fall; great isolated drops falling in a grudging half-hearted way. It would of course, they all said, be over in a moment, since it was not yet October. But when the *Cortissoz* left the dock and started down the channel of the *caño* which leads into the river, the drops fell fast, hurrying drops close together. The pinks and yellows and blues then moved back from the rail. Soon there were no longer distinguishable drops, but rain coming down in broad clear sheets, with all the finery huddled in the narrow passage between the half-dozen cabins.

We put on waterproof coats that we might remain on deck while the boat inched its way down the

crowded *caño*, which swarmed with steamboats and barges, rafts and launches and canoes.

And as we passed we saw Barranquilla greet the rain. Children ran along the bank shouting with glee, and in the recklessness of his joy a man drove his horse and his carriage and himself into the *caño*, that all might bathe together. A calico-frocked woman sat by the water's edge and loosened her long black hair, rejoicing in the downpour which drenched her. Men poling the heavy freight-barges had taken off the shirt and trousers which make up the sum of their clothing, and had become bronze nudes poling in the cool rain. It was as though with the coming of that fresh sweet rain, a hidden tension had been suddenly released.

When we passed out of the *caño* and into the river a torrent had been falling for forty minutes without sign of abatement; forty minutes of heavenly rain falling on that parched and dusty town. How clean and bright it must have washed the dust-dimmed garden of the *Pensión*, bringing to life the reds and yellows, purples and greens!

Still in the rain we crossed the broad Magdalena, over to the tiny mouth of that channel which is the back way to Santa Marta, entering the flat delta country and winding through a watery labyrinth of *caños* and of enormous marshes.

Groves of cocoanut-palms, bent in the direction of the prevailing trade-winds, were reflected in great pools of rain-water, and beyond were the sand-dunes which separated us from the sea. We passed from *caño* to swampy lake and back again to *caño*; to a *caño* so narrow that there was barely room to admit us.

The rain had ceased, and between walls of vine-draped trees we were advancing toward a cloudless sky.

The country was altogether different from that along the Dique, where, save for the mango-trees of the villages, the vegetation of the banks did not rise too high to shut out the vista of level plains stretching away to low rolling hills; while in the *caño* of the delta we passed between the festooned walls of tropical jungle, thickly massed foliage, deeply intensely green, with at long intervals tiny clearings, which as a rule contained but a solitary hut, although in one case the jungle had been driven back far enough to make room for a village of four.

These huts are as primitive as possible. One needs only the will for a hut and the stout machete which is at once the weapon and the tool of all dwellers in the South American forest; the jungle furnishing bamboo uprights and the palm thatch.

Of course, if one is ambitious, bamboo walls may be added, but walls are after all a luxury.

Furnishing is equally simple; bamboo platforms raised a few feet from the earthen floor serve as beds, tables, or chairs; several clay water-jars and cooking-pots stand about, and from the rafters hang strips of meat, bunches of bananas, perhaps even a hammock, and rarely some spare garment.

The huts are built so close to the water that from a distance they seem to float. About many of them the owners construct bamboo stockades whose object is to discourage visitors in the person of alligators, with which the *caño* swarms.

And through this *caño* we moved so slowly that nothing seemed startled. The naked children of the huts merely stared curiously. There was no break in the little monotonous frog-piping. Birds fluttered from one branch to another, sometimes flying along with us from tree to tree; and so close were the banks that we had to dodge the branches, remembering the unfortunate man who on the night-boat had put his head out of a cabin window and been killed by a blow from one of these very branches.

The *caño* twists and turns between its fragrant garlanded walls; with always the surprise of what may lie beyond the turns. Perhaps there will be a

lake whose surface is spread with water-lilies; and where there are water-lilies there will also be jacanas walking about on the floating leaves and unfurling and furling their lemon wings as though they were tiny coquettish fans. Or perhaps there will be a solitary fisherman as still as bronze in his canoe; or some singularly enchanting wall of flowering vine-clad tree repeating itself on the limpid surface of the *caño*. But whatever the surprise beyond the turn, there is always unspoiled beauty.

Not even the banana industry of the district about Santa Marta has touched the primitive life of the *caño*, although it is because of the prosperity brought by bananas that little boats chug back and forth between Barranquilla and Ciénaga, which is the headquarters for many of the banana workers. It is bananas which are responsible for the silks and pearls of our passengers; and bananas have built the ninety-seven miles of railroad which tap the plantations, and with which we were planning to connect at Ciénaga on the opposite shore of the great lake into which our charming *caño* was leading us.

The bananas were even responsible for our own presence on the *Cortissoz*, since it was in order to visit one of the plantations that we were journeying to Santa Marta.

In the afternoon of that lovely day we left the *caño* and entered the last and largest of the *ciénaga* lakes; and as we steamed quietly across its peaceful desertion we were headed toward the Santa Marta range whose peaks showed through foamy cloud. The breeze was freshly cool. One of the crew played on a harmonica, played monotonously over and over the same scrap of a tune, when all at once there was an explosion, and our gentle progress across the glassy lake came to an end, as did the little tune on the harmonica.

Below there was excited talk: a piston-rod had snapped and blown off the head of a cast-iron cylinder. The anchor-chain rattled over the side of the boat, to settle quietly at the bottom of the lake.

We waited then for repairs, while all about us fish leaped from the placid surface, leaping four feet into the air and falling at once like streaks of silver, back into the lake. We waited, and sunset dyed pink the little clouds in the lap of the Sierra, from whose snowy crests the mists slowly cleared. But the sunset had passed, and the last train for Santa Marta had departed before we pulled up anchor and were creeping along on one cylinder toward the deep purple of the mountains.

It was night, and the girls in pink and blue and yellow lit cigarettes. A mother had undressed a



microscopic six-months-old baby, replacing its blue organdie over a black slip, with a wee white night-dress; and in the shelter of the passageway she was gently rocking it to sleep.

It is in these our fellow-passengers that the whole point of the piston-rod adventure lies. There were eight children on that passenger list, and they must have been dropping with fatigue; for we had left Barranquilla in the early morning. But not one of the eight uttered a word of complaint. Every one on board was as amiable as though breaking a piston-rod and hobbling in hours late were an agreeable part of the program.

Since the cabins of the *Cortissoz* were insufferably stuffy we decided to set up our cots on deck; for although conversation seemed too incessant for sleep, it would be pleasant to rest looking up at the stars.

The night-boat for Barranquilla advanced ablaze with light. We blew two deafening signals and were answered. She threw a rope and drew up to our starboard to discuss the disaster and then left us to crawl on to Ciénaga.

A fleet of canoes each with its lantern passed on their way to fish; and then in spite of the buzz of talk we fell into a brief sleep, to be waked suddenly by the hubbub of arriving at Ciénaga. Auto-

mobiles had come to meet the elegance of ribboned hair and silks, and horns added themselves to talk. There was the confusion of unloading, after which a tireless crew devoted some hours to pounding at the engine and to a discussion of each blow.

Another space of sleep followed the cessation of their industry, but, while it was yet dark, before even the crowing of roosters or the clang of church bells, there came suddenly the sound of many people all talking at once, quite close to us, almost in our ears.

At last in the vague dawn we discovered that the wharf to which we were tied was also the public market. The canoes which we had seen go out had returned full of fish, while, from the surrounding country, loads of oranges and pineapples, bananas and gourds, meat and vegetables, all had been assembled. We had waked in a South American market! "Meester" had only to step on shore to purchase fruit for breakfast, while I made coffee with mineral water and brewed it over an alcohol lamp. The hot gold sun came up from behind the Sierra, but before it had begun to heat the day we had caught the first train and were on our way through cactus and mesquite country, twenty-two miles down by the back way to the little town of Santa Marta.

## CHAPTER XII

### SANTA MARTA

**I**N Santa Marta nothing is far from anything else. There is of course a plaza, and equally of course a great church faces the plaza, a church with two dome-like towers, white and pale blue, within which hang green bells.

The plaza is but two blocks from the Hotel Francés; not more than three minutes' walk to the foot of the street is the bay; two minutes in another direction is a diminutive park with palms, a silent fountain, and, diagonally opposite, the two-story office-building of the Fruit Company, its many windows shaded by white awnings. The brief streets leading from these centers make up all there is of Santa Marta.

Just beyond the limit of streets there is in one direction the great wireless station of the Fruit Company and in another the mosquito-netted bungalows of the Company officials, standing among flowers and palms and tennis-courts like a transplanted fragment of the Canal Zone. And this is all there

is of the suburbs. Santa Marta is thus tiny and intimate.

The bay like the town is in miniature, although sufficiently deep to give anchorage to large ships. Arid hills inclose it, so sparsely covered with parched scrub and cactus growing at wide intervals out of dry soil that they seem more barren than if they were entirely bare. And the bay is intensely blue and the hills hard in the sharpness of their outline. There is no perspective; houses and palms and hills might have been cut out of cardboard and set up around a bay colored from that little rectangle in the paint-box which is labeled indigo. And if there be a ship in the harbor, that, too, will be of cardboard. For sharp outline and color dominate, rather than depth and detail.

And the whole stands forth distinct and unwavering in brilliant desert light, for Santa Marta never shimmers as does Cartagena, nor is it dust-blurred, like Barranquilla. It might be an Arab village on the edge of the desert, overlooking the Mediterranean. The window-barred houses which are part of the Moorish legacy to Spain emphasize the resemblance, while the domed church might pass for a mosque; and only the bungalows of the Fruit Company, with the publicity of their verandas, are out of the picture.

The Hotel Francés of Santa Marta is in scale with the town and the bay, for it has only four bedrooms, although its dining-room can seat perhaps twenty-five.

In that hotel I realized my wish to live in a rose-colored house with a window-grating on the street, with large doors which date from colonial days, and with wooden shutters of the proper shade of faded turquoise.

At night I would amuse myself by sitting as the women who belong to rose-colored houses sit, on the stone window-seat behind the bars, looking out into the street, while people pass along the narrow ledge of sidewalk. And Santa Marta holds the record for the narrowness of these ledges, which are often only twelve inches wide, seldom more than eighteen inches, and raised at least a foot from the street level; a precaution indicative of what happens when it rains. The ledges being thus narrow, people pass very close to where I sit in the dark following the Santa Marta fashion. When a man speaks to his companion, it seems as though the remark were intended for my particular ear; or if he pauses to light a cigarette I will actually feel the warmth of the flaring match, or catch a whiff of the smoke before he goes on.

As I sit there in the dark I begin to realize that

after all love-making through the window-bars of a Spanish-American house offers no end of alluring possibilities.

On the opposite wall I discover a fantastic shadow pantomime. Two little naked boys pass, becoming in shadow grotesquely the size of men; men moving with child-grace, gleefully skipping, stopping to wonder, striking attitudes of boxing, gleefully skipping; shifting from one fleeting mood to another as they pass from sight.

There are often long pauses when the street becomes so quiet that those who sit in the window have nothing to do but to gaze up at the star-powdered sky, divided by the window-bars into long narrow rectangles; while across the way on an upper balcony a rocker sways everlastingly back and forth.

And if I rise with the rooster of the patio, for we have our own private hotel rooster and can no longer throw stones on the subject; if I rise then, and sit in the window, I may see the charcoal-boy. He will pass under the window with his sweet tremulous reiteration of "*Carbón . . . carbón . . . carbón!*" And he will come cross-legged upon a donkey, perched between two wooden racks which hold the sacks of charcoal. He will come crying "*Carbón*" up and down the streets until in the distance his cry becomes as wild and sad as was once the song of

old negroes who, remembering slavery, sang far off in the corn-fields.

What is there, I wonder, so infinitely sad about selling charcoal in the very early morning?

Through the porters we made the discovery that it is not customary to do more than remain overnight at the hotel.

After having several times rescued our luggage from the hands of those well-meaning porters who took it for granted that we must be leaving by every outgoing boat, it gradually dawned upon us that they found it incredible that any one should remain so long in Santa Marta. People who came over from Barranquilla to catch the Fruit boat they could understand, and of course there were occasional traveling salesmen; but such birds of passage put up at the hotel for only a night or two. They did not even remain long enough to write their laundry-lists on the walls of their rooms, as they do in Cartagena, where from the walls one may learn both the Spanish and the English for the masculine apparel of the tropics.

Thus it was puzzling to porters to have us stay on at the Francés without comprehensible excuse, simply drifting with the days while Santa Marta

revealed itself, gradually, much as a human character little by little admits one to intimacy.

Among our discoveries was a certain *Sodería Continental* where cocoanuts were kept on ice. After having an opening cut and two straws inserted into our cocoanuts, we would then take them into the park, to enjoy their delicious iced milk under the thick shade of an almond-tree.

It was through this habit of frequenting the park that we happened one day to see the banana loaders as they were paid off by the Fruit Company.

Many had come in their own automobiles, for why does one earn money if not to spend it? And when a one-roomed adobe house rents for five dollars a month; when a hundred bananas may be had for five cents, and often for nothing; when meat is only six cents a pound and clothes a negligible factor, why shouldn't one drive up in one's own car to collect one's pay? Are there not always two banana ships to be loaded each week? And a union to regulate wages so that one may count on an income of fifteen dollars a ship. And there is no bugbear of saving. No one saves, for there is always some relative who may be appealed to in life's emergencies. Even religion is not taken so seriously in Santa Marta as in the interior towns.



The church provides any number of delightful festivities, and religion becomes a thing to be enjoyed, as are life and pay-day and automobiles.

But it is not quite so idyllic as appears upon the surface; for there is rum, and the women of these men stand waiting that they may secure the necessary household expenses before all is squandered.

These women who wait while the men file by the paymaster have passed from the primitive state where the fruit of toil, rather than money, is the currency; they have entered that phase of civilization where man's economic value is recognized, while woman must wheedle for her payment; until from being a self-respecting entity she has been forced to become a creature of wiles.

But outside the town between the bay and the wireless station there is a cocoanut-grove where life in a hut under the trees seems as simple as though there were no such beast as the double-headed monster of industrialism with its face of bounty and of tyranny.

When the wind is from the sea this cocoanut-grove is a delightful place to spend an afternoon. The breeze has then the fragrance of a cool ripe watermelon which has just been opened; there is the rhythmic rush and ebb of little waves on a

yellow curve of beach; the high heads of the palms rustle, and out in the bay pelicans are fishing.

There, under the cocoanuts, out of hearing of the roaring dynamos of the wireless, it is possible to feel the faint vibration of that undercurrent of primitive emotions which still flows, although in the presence of progress it has sunk to the hidden depths of the stream.

The inhabitants of the cocoanut-grove would, for example, know about the *Secretos*, the Secret Ones, who treat the diseases of men and of animals by a mysterious prayer about which the natives are persistently reticent.

It was from a man who has lived sympathetically and long in Santa Marta that I learned of the existence of the *Secretos*, and I have never found them mentioned in any written account of the place. This man could tell me nothing of the nature of the prayer, but he knew that the Secret Ones were often summoned in case of illness, especially of snake-bite; and that if for any reason they could not come in person, the Secret One's sandal was sent to the sufferer as a material manifestation of his treatment by prayer.

In Cartagena the legends and the facts of the past are so tangible that they actually compete with

the present, but although Santa Marta is some years older than Cartagena, it is so dominated by its cosmopolitan present that the past is elusive. There are no ancient walls and tunneled forts to recall it. Like the soul, it must be invited.

The great banana district has already transformed Santa Marta into a place where, as in New York, one is more aware of the foreigner than of the native. There is, of course, the hospitable colony of the Fruit Company with their bungalows and their tennis-courts. There are the Company's ships putting into Santa Marta twice a week for bananas, and sometimes bringing a few tourists. The ships are commanded by British and North American captains; the crews represent all nations. And there are the banana loaders, lured by the new industry from the West Indies, from the island of Curaçao, as well as from all parts of Colombia itself. The proprietor of the hotel is French, the waiter and majordomo from the interior city of Medellín, the cook from Mompox on the Magdalena, while the porters have come over from Barranquilla. The half-dozen coachmen who drive dilapidated surreys and rickety horses about Santa Marta all confess complete ignorance of the place, because they have just come from somewhere else.

A huge industry is blotting out the old tradition,

and a new personality is in the making. Thus I found no acquaintances with whom I could reconstruct the conquest and all that followed it. Alone I must invite the past of Santa Marta. And I found that it was at sunset on the beach that I could most easily visualize what had gone before.

For the indigo bay is the same. The desolate desert hills remain unchanged. The pelicans fishing do not differ from their ancestors of four hundred years ago. Sunsets flamed then, and, as now, quickly faded. It is September, and rain is falling on the massed blue of the abrupt Santa Marta Range, falling as it fell in the September of 1536; and when there is rain in the mountains it is still unsafe to attempt the trails.

But, though I may not mount their trails, I may face the flames of a sunset sky, while I invite the past.

In those mountains high above the limit of the coffee plantations still dwell the vanishing remnants of the Indians with whom the conqueror had to reckon.

Two hundred years ago a priest, Padre de la Rosa, wrote of the Indians about Santa Marta; in writing he quoted much from a padre who had preceded him by two hundred years; and twenty-three years ago Francis Nicholas, in the "American

Anthropologist," quotes from those priests of centuries past.

If Padre de la Rosa could return he would gaze bewildered about a changed Santa Marta; but back in the mountains among the Ahruacos Indians he would find little to alter in his chronicle of their customs and beliefs.

Only in their diminished numbers do they differ from their forebears. Unlike the Chibcha Indians of the plateau, they did not amalgamate with the Spaniards but, like the Motilones, simply retired farther and farther into the inaccessibility of the mountains.

There the padre would find them living in the little round houses with which he was familiar; little round houses with high conical roofs of thatch; little houses always in pairs, the house of the husband and the house of the wife, with between them the stone on which the woman sets forth her lord's food; for the one never enters the home of the other.

And the padre would remember their belief that a child must never be created in darkness, since it would then have no "light in its eyes" but would be born blind.

He would find that his Ahruacos still "use few words and are peaceable"; that their faces are as he described them, "humble and serene"; that they

dress in the same long robes of coarse cloth which reach to the knees and are sometimes girdled with ropes of Sisal hemp; that they live chiefly upon the vegetables they raise; and that they chew the cocaine of which four hundred years ago they said to the Spaniard, "Sir, chewing these leaves we are neither hungry nor tired."

And still, like Adam and Eve, their lives center about the secluded gardens which are the meeting-place of husband and wife. And every year in the month of December the round high-peaked houses and the gardens are deserted. The Ahruacos have shouldered the knapsacks and cooking-pots which compose their furniture and have disappeared, up across the snow and into the unexplored mountains. No one has ever discovered where they go or for what reason; it is rumored that they make a pilgrimage to some ancient temple hidden in those interior hills, but the nature of the ceremonies and the site of the temple remain as mysterious as before Columbus ever discovered a New World.

Thus a people, shrunk in numbers to less than a thousand, perpetuate the beliefs of their fathers, unshaken by the new civilization which has grown up at the foot of their hills; a people gradually becoming extinct while they cling to the old ways and the old convictions.

So Padre de la Rosa would find the Ahruacos much as he had left them; while over in the Sierra back of El Banco the Motilones of whom he wrote also still keep off the stranger with their poisoned arrows, and to-day little more is known of them than Padre de la Rosa knew, except that it is estimated that they are now reduced to five or six thousand.

To the east of Santa Marta on the Goajira Peninsula still live the padre's old friends, the Goajira Indians, some thirty or forty thousand in number; warlike and prolific; voluntarily trading with the Colombians, but stoutly maintaining their independence; Indians with cattle and horses and the pearls for which they dive, each man taking as many wives as he can afford, tribe carrying on vendetta-like feud against tribe; picturesque Indians, scantily clothed in red embroidered tunics with feathers in their hair.

But Indians are no longer to be seen in Santa Marta, so changed among the changeless desert hills which inclose its harbor, where at sunset the sky flames as four centuries ago upon the eve of Quesada's departure to explore the Magdalena River and to conquer a kingdom of whose very existence even the Indians of Santa Marta were ignorant.

In the miserable cluster of adobe hovels which then made up the village, disillusioned Spaniards were dying of fever; and the governor, Don Pedro, argued that mutiny could be avoided only by the diversion of conquest; for in those days the slaughter of Indians and the plundering of their villages was an infallible remedy against rebellion.

Therefore Don Pedro decreed that Jimenez de Quesada, a young lawyer of good family from the south of Spain, be put at the head of an expedition into the vast unknown interior of Colombia. Don Pedro had six brigantines built. These were to sail around to the mouth of the Magdalena and one hundred miles up the river to Tamalameque, then the limit of Spanish exploration in Colombia. There they would be joined by Quesada, his men, and his cavalry, who were to proceed by land from Santa Marta.

It was April 6, 1536, after a solemn mass, that the six brigantines sailed out of the harbor, while Quesada with six hundred men, eighty cavalry, and the ass, Marobe, set forth on the arduous march to Tamalameque. Few of those six hundred men are now remembered by name, and of the eighty horses the names are forgotten, while the ass, Marobe, is immortal. And truly Marobe's story is as romantic as that of the great Quesada himself; for Marobe



was as dauntless as the most daring of the conquerors. Indeed the old chronicler, Fray Simón, declares that Marobe may "with justice be called a conqueror, since he was the first of his species to tread the soil of Colombia."

The vessel in which Marobe had set sail from Spain had been wrecked off the coast, and he had, like a true conqueror, boldly swum to the shore of the new land, where he appeared to the astonished Indians as even more supernatural than the Spaniards themselves. They swung this wonderful strange creature to a pole and carried him up over the mountains to their village, where he lived for months, treated with all the homage due supernatural beings.

But Marobe was not silent on his "peak in Darien"; and upon one of those salutary expeditions, sent forth to dispel ennui and disheartenment, Don Pedro heard a sound as familiar to him as his own tongue. He heard the braying of Marobe. Marobe had always brayed and saw no reason why he should give up old habits now that he was supernatural and a conqueror.

Don Pedro of course investigated that unexpected braying, and Marobe was conducted to Santa Marta eventually to go exploring with Quesada.

How illuminating would be the memoirs of

Marobe! The flora of the new country would of course have interested him. His diary would have contained notes upon the surprising inedibility of the great jungle which looked so promising and was yet so disappointing. And how painfully uncivilized he must have found his own kingdom, the kingdom of beasts; positively more heathen than the Indians who at least had houses, whereas the animals were all of them shockingly uncivilized, living in that inhospitable jungle!

In all the exhausting way, through the heat of the Magdalena Valley, and panting up over the Andes into the realm of the Chibchas, Marobe, save for the members of his own party, saw no domestic animals; no chickens, no cattle or sheep, no horses, no asses like himself; not even the strange haughty llamas which the Spaniards found domesticated in Ecuador and Peru.

Colombia before the conquest was a lonely country for a civilized beast; while the trails, worn only by men, were execrable. On the ascents it was necessary to plant his fore feet firmly and, by a mighty effort, to pull his rear up to join them; on the descents the same trusty fore feet had to brace themselves while the rear of Marobe slid perilously down; with all the long way his ears registering the emotions of an explorer.

After such participation in subduing the New World, Marobe's end seems unworthy; but so probably do all conquerors consider their ends.

Certainly Pizarro would not have chosen to be assassinated by his own countrymen as he sat digesting a good Sunday dinner and enjoying the title of Marquis; nor would Quesada have chosen after his long and stirring life to die the slow death of leprosy. Marobe's fate was also tragic, and he might well have felt some ignominy in having been upon a later expedition, killed and eaten, in one of those extremities of starvation which so often tortured the Spanish explorers. •

But regardless of their ends they were, Quesada and Marobe, each in his own way conquerors, for each had endured much, dared much, and overcome much.

And the kingdom which they conquered was destined to be one of Spain's richest colonies. The wretched village of Santa Marta became a town with rose and blue houses and a great church with domes. Colonists came out from Europe, establishing sugar and coffee plantations; and the Indians withdrew farther into the mountains.

Santa Marta was important and prosperous, with no presentiment that dead days were to follow upon

the building of that seventeen-mile stretch of railroad connecting Barranquilla with the sea, and thus shifting trade with the interior from Cartagena and Santa Marta to Barranquilla. Cartagena suffered from that transfer of commerce, but Santa Marta died. Ships ceased to put into its safe, deep little harbor. Colonists, abandoning their houses and estates, returned to Europe, often never to be heard of again. Empty houses stood about Santa Marta, and any one who chose could go and live in them. For dead Santa Marta had no vision of the rich days that were to follow upon the discovery by a Fruit Company that thousands of its surrounding acres awaited only irrigation to become one of the best banana lands in the Americas.

The sunset flame has passed, and with it has gone my reverie. It is a hot breathless night in one of the fat years which bananas have brought to Santa Marta, and we have come down to the dock to watch the steamship *Tortuguero* loaded with a cargo of fruit for England and Rotterdam.

On the dock a continuous procession of men passes from a freight-car drawn up on one side, to a canvas conveyor leading from the wharf to the deck of the ship. A little spluttering engine runs the conveyor, and the men pass back and forth in

two dizzy streams; a stream of unloaded men pouring one by one into the car; and an emerging stream in single file each bearing on his right shoulder a great green bunch of bananas; into the car empty, and, loaded, back to the revolving conveyor.

Within the car men are stationed to help lift the bunches to the shoulders of the loaders, placing each bunch so that the fruit points forward. When, with a swift but perceptible adjustment of muscle to burden, the loader trots heavily across the dock.

There, as he turns, two men shift the load from his shoulder to the constantly revolving conveyor; bunch by bunch, one after another, placed end to end, on the ever-moving strip of canvas; for this is not the type of conveyer which carries the fruit in horizontal pockets.

His burden deposited, the loader becomes again part of the stream pouring into the car, to emerge bearing great green bunches; two giddy streams; into the car, back to the conveyor, and into the car again; throughout the thirty-six hours required to load one of the big ships whose capacity is ninety-six thousand bunches.

If there is the faintest slackening of speed, the men at the conveyor slap the canvas or clap their hands; the streams are then accelerated; the men running, loaded and unloaded, in continual rotation.

There is no hesitation, no confusion; no break in the rhythm.

Indeed it is so difficult to cut across the lines that we await the momentary lull when the men sleeping on top of the cars rouse to shift the "empties," in order to make room for the full cars constantly arriving from up the lines; bringing more and yet more green bunches to be placed on men's shoulders, and conveyed on revolving canvas to a ship's deck.

When we climb to that upper deck we find that at the terminus of the conveyor men receive the bunches; turning them sideways and rolling them off, upon a padded mat, from which they are lifted over to the hatch.

In the hatch men stand with feet wide apart above an opening, where on a lower level is another line of men, and below them a third, and in the depths of the ship an invisible fourth, who receive and place the bunches.

The men on the upper level grasp the bunches as they are handed from the padded mat; grasping them by the thick end of the stem and reversing them as they swing the fruit down to the next level; and so from level to level.

The men must bend low from the waist; down with a bunch and up to receive another; swinging down

and up; passing from deck to deck the heavy bunches.

These men do not laugh or talk or smoke, as do often the trotting loaders down on the dock. In their loose cotton trousers and undershirts they drip with perspiration as they bend and swing; silent as though such exertion in thick hot night were all they could endure. But from the deep hold, kept cool by artificial refrigeration, not for the greater comfort of man but to retard the ripening of fruit, there drifts up, through the openings down which bananas are passed, a song, to the measure of which the singers place the bunches; and as there is monotony in the careful placing of ninety-six thousand bunches of bananas, there is monotony in the melody drifting up to the deck.

Returning to the wharf we watch again the dizzy lines; to the left a line and to the right a line; into the car empty and out again bearing great grass-green bunches; passing and passing and passing; while the engine splutters and the conveyor revolves.

And as I watch I see them not as men, but as ants; an endless procession of umbrella-ants, each with its green leaf; industrious, praiseworthy ants, before whose toil I am at once reverent and rebellious.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### IN THE BANANAS

**T**RAMPS though we are," the man in the hammock was saying, "tramps though we are, and not supposed to understand anything about beauty, I've known many a night when we'd sit here watching those mountains, and could n't say a word."

The man straddled the hammock, his feet in riding-boots resting on the floor, and keeping the hammock swaying ever so slightly. He was like some blond Nordic giant set down in this Latin country; a giant in loose soft shirt, riding-trousers, and leather puttees over his boots.

He had the level voice of the North American which, compared to all other speech, is so singularly without inflection. And in his arms nestled the tiniest of baby ocelots; a tiger-cat, they called him, after the South American custom, which dignifies both the ocelot and the jaguar with a name which would amuse a Bengal tiger.

We sat on the veranda of a bungalow in the heart of the great banana region back of Santa Marta. It was the district engineer's bungalow, but, his



wife being on a visit to her people in the States, it had been generously put at our disposal; not only the bungalow, but its fat black cook who hailed from Martinique, its house-boy (a native of the island of Granada in the British West Indies), its tiger-kitten, the plantations which surround it, and the view of the Santa Marta range from its netting-inclosed veranda. All were ours.

On the veranda we looked across the flat banana lands to those mountains, blue and irregular, crowned with opal snow; an independent range which, without the warning of foot-hills, rises suddenly, from the low-lying country east of the Magdalena River, and extends east and west along the Caribbean; an isolated range having no connection with the Andean system of eastern, western, and central Cordilleras which, running north and south, cut Colombia into longitudinal sections.

"There is no range so beautiful," continued the man in the hammock, speaking with the deep personal affection which mountains impose upon those who dwell near them.

It was the hour when the half-dozen Anglo-Saxons of the banana plantations at Sevilla were accustomed to gather on the veranda, for talk, for smoke, for the mixing of drinks, and for play with Andy, the tiger-kitten.

This Andy was a tiny thing, six weeks old and not more than eight inches long. There were white moons on the back of his black little ears, and black lines ran the length of his small eager face. He had big inquisitive white whiskers and a delightfully ferocious growl. As Désiré, the cook remarked, he was "*muy tigre*," which is another way of saying he was every inch a tiger.

But for all that he was a baby with cunning tricks and a pathetic craving to be cuddled by the strange creatures who had so bewilderingly replaced his mother.

Partly because of Andy and partly because it was a tropical veranda, talk was desultory; snatches of discursive talk, somehow always more illuminating than any self-conscious and logical discourse.

"I wonder why they're paying by the day to put up that bungalow," came meditatively, punctuated by slow intermittent puffs at a pipe. "The only way to hire these fellows is on contract. Otherwise . . . they go to sleep in the bananas. . . ."

"Oh, that? . . . One of the men has gone home to get married, and the bungalow's supposed to be ready for him when he gets back."

"You know the company supplies us with——"

"Will you look at Andy!"

Andy had descended to the floor, where some one

had playfully thrown a Panama hat over him, its crown completely eclipsing the tawny spotted little body, which was revolving invisible beneath it.

"Here, Andy! Andy!" as he emerged to contemplate the joke with bored disdain.

"Oh, yes . . . the Company supplies us with bungalows and furniture. We get servants and ice free, too. It wouldn't cost such a lot to live if whisky and cigarettes weren't so expensive . . . forty cents a package for the cheapest foreign cigarettes and thirty cents for native brands."

"That's because, next to the lottery, the chief government revenue is from tobacco and alcohol.

"They're leased monopolies, you know, auctioned off to the highest bidder. Whatever he makes above the bid is his."

"Naturally he's going to boost prices all the traffic will bear."

"Powell!" the man in the hammock lifted up his voice. "Powell! . . . Bring some more cracked ice." And as he mixed, "Guess we can have another round if the stuff is eight dollars a bottle."

Among those employees of the Fruit Company there was only youth: the men who gathered on the bungalow veranda were all young; youth giving itself to the development of a huge industry.

But, however conversation started, it came always



IN THE BANANAS



back to that industry. Bananas, it seemed, were exacting. Some of the men had been all day riding the irrigation ditches. It was important to see that nowhere had the ditches been tampered with, for water was vital to the well-being of bananas. Water must be turned into the plantations at least once a month, and there was discussion concerning which farms were next to be flooded.

It was explained that bananas grow best when their heads are hot and their feet wet. That was why the Santa Marta district was so ideal. There was comparatively little rain in the course of the year, with a high temperature; while rivers fed by the snows of the Sierra provided water for irrigation. Take typical tropical country, like Central America, where there was plenty of rain, there were also months of insufficient sun; while in regions of continual sunshine, there was apt to be scarcity of water.

They discussed the enemies of the banana, the small beetle which was destroying many bunches; and they called the bunches "stems." But the dread enemy was wind. It had destroyed two million stems the previous year, and already this year a million were gone. The winds come with a speed of sixty or seventy miles an hour, before which the plants, top-heavy with the weight of their bunches, are

mowed down. An owner may go to bed a rich man and wake up a pauper, his whole plantation wiped out.

And while we talked night descended upon the veranda.

There were often long pauses, for men who live in lonely places lose their fear of human silence. Such pauses were filled by insistent frogs piping softly in the irrigation ditches, piping in the starless dark of leaf-canopied ditches. And although they piped primarily of life as frogs live it, they seemed also to pipe of the life which bananas know; miles of bananas out there in the darkness. . . .

Sometimes such pauses were broken by the screech of a phonograph from the commissary bungalow.

"They love phonographs," commented the hammock, "phonographs and automobiles and player-pianos. That 's how their money goes. . . . You 've been to the village?"

"Yes"; we knew the village; thatched, largely populated by dogs, and lit by candles and lanterns.

"Well, you 'd be surprised at the number of player-pianos and phonographs they have in those huts."

And I remembered little Baños in Ecuador, a flower-thatched village so far from the twentieth century that it had never heard a phonograph, where

at night its people sang to their guitars, where every man had his song and expressed the beauty in his soul. I was wondering why industrial progress must destroy beauty, when I was recalled to the banana industry.

“You ’ll be here next week when we cut for the American boat?”

“As soon as the ship wires Santa Marta of its arrival, we get our instructions to cut. The districts have reported how many stems they can supply, and a quota has been allotted each farm.”

“How many do we supply this time, Mac? . . . Oh, watch out there for Andy! He ’s right under your rocker!”

Andy was fond of toddling on the young uncertainty of his legs, going from chair to chair to solicit attention.

“How many do we supply? . . . Oh, we ’re booked for five thousand by this boat.”

So the talk came always back to bananas, as though the acres which surrounded us took precedence over the limited human interests of those four little bungalows of the Fruit Company. It might be diverted to the tennis-game of the afternoon; to the gorgeous blue and yellow macaw which was the pride of the bachelors’ bungalow; to Andy purring in some one’s arms; to a pet troupiel in the com-



missary which bugled throughout the long hot days; to the three monkeys owned by one of the superintendents up the line, who, when life was dull, fed his monkeys upon rum and sweetened water, whereupon life was no longer dull. Although talk thus wandered to the small incidents of exile life, it always came back to bananas.

"Yes, all the farms begin cutting as soon as instructions come in. You can't wait with bananas. We deliver just as fast as the stems are cut, and down in Santa Marta the ships load night and day.

"You 've got to have special ships, too, refrigerator-ships. The temperature has to be kept down to fifty-five degrees, or the cargo 'll go ripe on you.

"No, you can't trifle with bananas. Why, we have to cut a different size according to the length of the voyage. We can cut a fuller fruit for the States than we can for Europe."

They were led on by our interest.

"You see, the fruit is always cut green, and it keeps right on developing, drawing the sap out of the thick stem. That 's why even a few degrees make such a difference; a chill is just as bad as too high a temperature. The darned thing 's still growing, and you mustn't check it or speed it up."

"And they 've got to be exactly as careful at the other end. A boat has to be discharged as soon as

she docks. With bananas there 's no time to spare. You 'll find freight-cars waiting at the wharf when you get back to New York; freight-cars and motor-trucks. You 'll see them auction off truck-loads on the dock.

“In cold weather they put up canvas wind-shields to protect the fruit while it 's being discharged; in the trucks they cover it with blankets; the cars are heated in winter and iced in summer. You can't be too careful with bananas.”

Thus from the first, even before I went into the plantations, my whole point of view had been reversed, the bananas having come to be the dominant thing rather than ingenious man who had worked out the details of that amazing industry, which is scarcely more than a generation old.

Even the mountains, which rise high above any faint rustle of banana-leaves; those mountains about whose beauty the man in the hammock had said, “Tramps though we are——,” even they send down their snows to irrigate the acres.

The bananas live in a great green stillness. Grassy lanes intersect the plantations. There is an occasional cart-road, and that, too, is green. The lanes branch off at right angles from the roads, stretching away straight and narrow under green

arches of banana-leaves, stretching straight and endless into the converging perspective of distance, deserted green lanes upon which in light and shadow trunk and leaf and drooping bunch are tremulously patterned.

On either side of the lanes is the forest of bananas, the plants spaced twelve by fifteen feet apart and rising twenty, thirty, forty feet high.

Here and there in this deep jungle of bananas the old stalks which have borne their single bunch of fruit stand up a yard from the ground as they were left after the harvesting; stalks now dry and dead and brown, their sap having flowed back to help nourish the sturdy young "followers" sent up from the roots. The leaves of once lofty heads carpet the ground where they lie rotting, fertilizing the land that it may bring forth more; other leaves, bent or broken, hang from the plants, some still green, some yellowing into the brown of death. While above droops the green roof of fresh and vital leaves; tender young leaves, and mature leaves fringed and frayed with wind and age. Among them, hung high, are the great green bunches of bananas.

Animal life within the plantations is soft-pedaled in harmony with the surrounding stillness.

There is a procession of ants, leading from a tunnel of their own excavation to a green-leafed

vine many yards away. There the ants are busy, cutting from the leaves semicircular fragments with which they hurry back to the tunnel; pouring into its entrances bearing their fragments, and emerging unburdened, to return to the vine for more. They go and come over a six-inch trail, worn as smooth as the track of a cart-wheel by the countless marching of their myriad feet. And it is possible to hear the infinitesimal rustle of their passing; for in the hush of the plantations the smallest sound becomes important. They pass into the tunnel bearing green bits of leaf, and back again to the vine; as in Santa Marta the banana loaders had conveyed the great green bunches from freight-cars to ship.

The ants thus move from vine to tunnel and back as though their task were never done. And never do I obediently pause to "consider her ways," without questioning whether ants and the industrialism which imitates them are, after all, so desirable. And has not a bird more wisdom as he sings on a swaying sunlit branch, recognizing alike the claim of work and of song?

There are lizards, too, in the bananas; everywhere slender tiny lizards scuttling over and under the leaves; banana-green lizards with heads yellow like the yellow of the drying leaves and tails as brown as the dead stalks. There are also dark blue lizards

with turquoise tails; so many lizards that there is constant rustling among the leaves.

To them as to us every movement, every noise in the quiet of the plantations becomes significant. When I turn the page of my note-book they dart terrified from one hiding-place to another. Even the strident buzz of mosquitos is here subdued, and gauzy dragon-flies and great tobacco-brown butterflies drift on silent wings in the patches of sunlight sifted down through the roof. There are invisible whispered chirpings, and everywhere is the infinitely soft whirl of humming-birds, poised vibrant before the blossoms of the banana.

To hear the rustling march of the ants you must bend close, for that is the softest of all the sounds in the green stillness where bananas live: the whirring of humming-birds' wings is slightly more audible, and by comparison the sudden intermittent scurrying of lizards, over and under dry leaves, is almost loud, while the ventriloquial chirpings and the occasional tinkle of a frog somewhere in the labyrinth of irrigation trenches are clear sound in spite of their softness; and from time to time at irregular intervals there is a gentle thud as though something heavy fell to earth.

Noises from the world outside come distance-dulled; the sharp complaining cry of a high-perched





THE FIRST "HAND"

hawk, eager parrots chattering in a treetop, the rattle of a cart along the road to Sevilla; all as subdued as echoes, and finally, in the depths of the bananas, ceasing to be.

Then it is that we become aware of the rhythmic life-cycle of the banana; of the full-grown plants whose huge leaves roof in the stillness and of their descendants, the "followers," those tender shoots which will in ten months be ready to produce fruit for Europe and America, taking the place of those whose heads will have been cut off with the harvesting of their bunches.

And the fruit-bearing plants go through a similar youth-to-maturity cycle. Plants, the purple tips of whose buds are just beginning to show above the sheathed green leaves which compose their trunks, stand beside older plants whose fruit is ready for cutting. In others the bud at the end of its long stalk has come up through the trunk and hangs drooping from its own weight.

As there are "followers" in all stages of unfolding their young leaves, so there are buds in all gradations of development: buds like colossal ears of corn still in the husk, heavy pinkish-purple buds at the end of long flower-stalks. And there are buds in which the thick tough sheaths have begun to unroll; unrolling so slowly that to our dull eyes their



movements are invisible; unrolling without sound audible to our ears, which must stoop low to catch the rustle of tramping ants.

As the sheaths of the buds unroll, they reveal clusters of palest yellow blossoms, each blossom depending from a possible banana; two and a half inches of blossom and an inch of embryonic banana.

Such a cluster is destined, if all goes well, to become what the trade calls a "hand," made up of from ten to twenty-five bananas, which are the "fingers" of the "hand."

The sheath curls back and upward into a tight roll, leaving just enough of itself to act as a sunshade over the tiny flowering "hand," which, at this stage of its development, points downward. It is before these flowers that the brilliant blue-backed humming-birds poise on softly whirring wings, blurred and vibrant.

One by one the purple sheaths roll back, disclosing similar fruit-clusters arranged spirally about the flower-stalk; each cluster shaded by its overhanging sheath. But the young fruit soon outgrows this sunshade of babyhood, and the sheath, having served its purpose, falls with a little thud to the ground; bequeathing its task to the parasol-leaf which began life simultaneously with the bud and which has all this time been busily growing; developing into a

leaf different in character from the regular banana-leaves, a short broad leaf whose function is to shade the bunch as the bud-sheaths have shaded the individual clusters. Instinctively this parasol has located the point of greatest sun, and there it remains until the bunch is strong enough to dispense with protection, when the poor leaf dries up and is forgotten.

Slowly the "fingers" of the "hands" have been increasing in length and thickness, drawing sustenance from the stem; their number determined by the supply of available nourishment; the possible "hands" always exceeding those which mature, for clusters too far from the source of the sap must starve, drying up and falling to the ground where lie the sheaths which in vain guarded their infancy.

As the "hands" develop they gradually stand out from the stem. Thus the "hands" move, but by such infinitesimal degrees that we see nothing; inferring movement because here the fingers point downward; there they stand out ever so slightly from the stalk; here they are stiff green bristles at right angles; there they have begun to point upward, more and more upward until at last the blossom-end, which once faced the ground, is pointed skyward. And so skilfully placed around the stalk are the "hands" that as they increase in size and turn

upward they neatly overlap, no one cluster interfering with another.

In those bunches of sky-pointing fruit gradations of growth are as evident as in the plant and in the bud; for there are bunches whose fruit is still too thin to cut, bunches sufficiently developed for European shipment, and bunches of fuller fruit ready for the shorter voyage of the American boats.

This is life as the banana lives it, the epic of the banana, of which at night the frogs in the irrigation ditches seem to pipe.

There is life and movement. But we never see the process. Only the results are apparent. We see the complete bud, see it in the various stages of its unfolding. Everywhere the embryonic clusters of fruit; on this bunch pointing in one direction, on another at a different angle. All about are the bunches, thin bunches and full bunches. There is the forest of adult plants, and the young shoots of the future. While upon the ground dead bud-sheaths and dead leaves disintegrate, fertilizing the soil.

Although we thus see what has come to pass, we never see it happen. But without stirring from a given spot we may observe each stage in this life-cycle, and, mentally, telescoping the stages, we may construct in our minds a moving picture of this



A BUNCH IN THE MAKING



miracle of the banana, of whose living we may not detect so much as a whisper; that living which is even more intricate than the complicated organization which man has built up for the cultivation and for the delivery of bananas to the markets of the world.

With the heat of noon the great stillness in which bananas dwell grows more intense. There is less often the whirl of wings; fewer lizards scuttle over crackling leaves; there are no longer chirpings or the tiny solo tinkle of a frog. With the death of the breeze fewer sheaths seem to fall, and there remain only the inexhaustible ants, whose rustle one must stoop to catch; the ants and a drowsy droning bee; while all about, by silent miracle, bunches of bananas come into being, miles of great green bunches; always green, for the fruit is never permitted to ripen in the plantations.

The hushed expectancy of afternoon follows upon this dormant midday; and again there is whirl and chirp. But there is now a sense of hurry, a conviction of something impending in nature, as in Cartagena there is a presentiment of something new about to happen among men.

The air of this expectancy is hot, humid, oppressive, until a little breeze comes to stir the leaves

with a sound as of pattering raindrops. And there is far-off muffled thunder.

Up in the mountains we know that a deluge falls, but in the flat country of the bananas only a gentle shower follows upon the pattering breeze and the muffled thunder; for it is not yet October.

And with the falling of that brief shower, we discover that the long, graceful, silky, soft leaves are provided with a system of irrigation; as the Fruit Company has laid down an elaborate network of trenches leading into ditches, so the leaf of the banana has tiny trenches which feed a larger trench; for the great length of the leaf is ribbed with little troughs, three quarters of an inch apart; little channels leading from the outer edge of the leaf to the midrib which is a deeper channel. This central channel leads down to the base of the leaf, where it joins the trunk. It is along the lines of the smaller channels that the winds whip the banana-leaf into its characteristic fringe, cutting the leaf along the lines of these drains.

The shower falls, and we watch this irrigation system in action; the rain, striking the leaf, flows into the many lesser channels, is conducted to the center channel, and so down into the heart of the plant. And we are aware now of no sound but that of the softly falling rain and the dull distant thunder.

Even with the harvesting the stillness of the bananas is scarcely broken. We expected it to be an occasion of trampling noise; for five thousand bunches had been ordered from that section of the plantation adjacent to the bungalows, and the cutting, collecting, and loading were to be completed in the course of one day; for, as the men had said, "You can't wait with bananas." All over the district, therefore, the cutting would proceed simultaneously; five thousand bunches from one section; ten thousand from another; twenty-five hundred, and so on until the entire quota was assembled and ready to be hurried down by train, over the ninety-seven miles of banana railroad, to the dock at Santa Marta and to the waiting ship.

We rose early on this day of harvesting, and by seven o'clock we were in the bananas. Iridescent raindrops still glittered on the listless beauty of the long drooping leaves; in sunlight and shadow the pattern of plant and bunch trembled on the grassy lanes; and there was the same vast hush, broken by rustle and timid invisible chirping.

We must have made a mistake; we must be in the wrong part of the plantations, for here was no shouting activity.

Wandering puzzled up and down the lanes and along the cart-road, we came from time to time upon



a bunch lying by the roadside where some one had carefully placed it upon a great banana-leaf and covered it with another, for "you can't be too careful with bananas."

A couple of men on horseback cantered along the road and out of sight before we could question them. An ox-cart jogged off in the same direction. The cart had its floor and sides padded with the thick twisted fiber of dead banana-stalks. Wherever there lay a bunch by the roadside, the cart stopped, collected it, and went on.

"Oh, yes," the driver told us, "they were cutting all over the district."

"But where?" we questioned.

"Oh, everywhere," vaguely inclusive.

The cart passed, jogging slowly along and stopping to pick up bunches, lying under their leaves on the right and left of the road. And with its passing the plantation was left as quiet as upon the deserted days preceding the order to cut.

In the green lanes there was nowhere any one to be seen. A humming-bird whirred very close, and there was the sudden intermittent crackle of scampering lizards.

We jumped into a second cart, headed in the opposite direction from the first. As we jounced along we peered down all the lanes. Sometimes there

would be a cart in the lane, driving slowly along and collecting those bunches which had mysteriously been placed by the roadside; mysteriously for we saw none in the act of being placed. Again, as in the life of the banana itself, results rather than processes were apparent.

We sat in the back of the cart, swinging our feet in careless abandon as we bounced over the little log bridges that span the irrigation ditches, over the track of a railroad siding run down into the plantation to the various sheds where fruit is stacked awaiting collection.

Occasionally we passed a freight-car which had been already backed down the siding and was being loaded with the great green bunches, after having first been lined with protecting banana-leaves.

We bumped over these sidings and splashed through flooded areas where the sluice-gates had been opened, letting that water which had come down from the snows of the Sierra flow about the roots of whole districts; and we remembered that the banana grows best when its head is hot and its feet are wet.

We jogged thus for long distances, often with never so much as another cart in sight, and only the occasional bunches lying by the roadside to suggest that we were to supply five thousand "stems"

to the American boat just then docking at Santa Marta. We jogged under a blazing sun, for the cart-road does not share the green shade of the lanes, until we came to a receiving-shack on the main line of the railway. There we would wait, hoping to board one of the trains of "empties" and so return to the bungalow at Sevilla for lunch. Meanwhile there was shade in the shack.

A cart was being unloaded, the oxen panting in the heat; but they would be rewarded later by a feast of bunches which had been discarded as not measuring up to the rigid standard set by the Fruit Company.

We watched the men stack the bunches, close together, standing them on the thick end of their stems; the fruit thus pointed downward as in the days of its infancy, before the "hands" turned slowly upward. So it will one day hang in corner grocery shops, never again to point skyward as when it hung in the pride of its maturity among the great flapping leaves which roof the plantations.

Like the freight-cars and the ox-carts the shack had been prepared to receive the fruit; its earth floor carpeted with leaves and its sides padded with fiber twisted into thick ropes. All along the line of this banana railroad, and on the arms which it

extends into the plantations, are just such little shacks.

We sat on the leaves arranged for the bananas and waited for a train. A workman lay on his back on the leaves and sang, his bare toes wriggling in rhythm with the tune. From time to time a cart rattled in to be unloaded. And I talked to the superintendent, a lean yellow man suffering from *carote*, a pigmentary disease which the natives think is caused by the continuous bite of what they call *plaga*; and *plaga* is composed of mosquitos, of the black flies whose bite leaves painful water-blisters, and of small beasts resembling chiggers whose presence results in great irritation of the skin.

There is a black *carote*, seen in the interior, and the white variety with which my friend the overseer was afflicted, his hands and arms being covered with great pale blotches.

While we waited he talked to me about Conservatism and Liberalism, the two great issues, he said, which were before his country.

The laborer lying upon his back on the carpet of banana-leaves sang and wriggled his toes, while the overseer with *carote* spoke passionately about Liberalism, so passionately that I found myself pleading that revolution was not the way.

“No, señora,” he assented, “revolution is not the way.”

Thus in the heat of noon in a banana-shed we discussed the future of civilization, while around us the bananas stood, stacked in quiet green rows; cultivated and cut and stacked by the highly specialized organization which will deliver them to the markets of Europe and of America; a great organized industry which has made the desert bring forth fruit.

It was not until afternoon that we finally saw the process of cutting which all day had been going on throughout the plantations up and down the line.

The men, we discovered, go out by twos, the cutter and the backer. The cutter's tools are a twelve-foot pointed stick and a sharp machete. Thus in couples they go through the sections apportioned them, their trained eyes marking at once the bunches ready for shipment by British or American boats. The cutter then sticks the plant a few feet below the bunch, twisting the point, and slowly letting the bunch down within the reach of the backer, who grasps the bud-end of the fruit-stalk, carefully adjusting the bunch to his shoulders; while the cutter with swift, sure blows of the machete severs the bunch, strikes off the excess length of the stem, cuts two fresh long leaves which he places in the backer's left hand, and

finally cuts the trunk of the plant down to about a yard from the ground. The backer then trots off with his burden to the roadside, depositing it there, upon one of his leaves, and covering it with the other as a protection against the sun. All is accomplished quickly, dexterously, and so quietly that scarcely is the vast green stillness disturbed, even by the cutting of ninety-six thousand bunches.

Once more it is night on the veranda. Empty glasses stand about on window-ledges, on the railing, and on the floor. The windows of the bungalows are dark, and Andy has ceased to growl and to claw indignantly at the wire netting of his sleeping-cage. In the somber depths of the bananas frogs pipe softly of the miracle of living.

It is midnight, and we have been waked by the sound of a train, a freight-train being assembled with much backing and shifting; a train made up of those locked and loaded cars which all day smaller engines have been bringing in from the branch-lines which tap the plantations. Although the train is but a stone's throw from the veranda, its outline is lost in the pall of night. How many cars there are, each with its cargo of four hundred bunches, we cannot guess, but the train is long, for the distance between the red glow under the locomo-

tive and the green lights marking the last car is great. Hung here and there, without regularity, are the lanterns which the men have been using; and as the train moves off down the line these lanterns swing against the sides. There are men lying on top of the cars who, although they have worked hard all day in the sun, sing as the train moves out. And what a pity it will be when they have become too civilized to sing!

The swinging lanterns and the green lights disappear; the red glow of the rear light comes into view and vanishes. The first of the banana-trains has gone, carrying the bunches down to the dock at Santa Marta, forty miles away; where on the shoulders of men they will pass in continuous dizzy stream from freight-cars to revolving conveyors; carried as green leaf-fragments are borne aloft by ants in tireless procession; passing thus into the ship on the shoulders of men who toil like ants.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### YELLOW AND BLUE AND RED

“**V**EN, *GUACA*.” The child spoke imperiously, addressing a wing-clipped macaw, a macaw with lustrous plumage of yellow and blue and red; strong clear elemental colors.

The bird scorned to obey, but that made no difference; the humiliation was the same, for *Guaca* had once been a gorgeous, high-flying, free thing, condescending only to tree-tops.

Now it hobbled awkwardly about on the ground, stepping clumsily on its own toes; while a brown-legged child in a faded calico slip commanded arrogantly, “Come”; with the verb in the familiar second person, and the Colombian name for macaw abbreviated from *guacamayo* to *guaca*.

I had just left the house of the *hacienda* of San Pedro Alejandrino, where nearly a hundred years ago Simón Bolívar had died. I had been wandering from room to room, seeking something which I felt to be withheld; for rooms know so much more than they are willing to tell.

I had paused often in that final chamber of



Bolívar, letting my eyes rest upon the scene which had been the last to imprint itself upon his slowly fading brain.

I had looked through the grating of the long window, across the grassless, sun-baked yard to the low white building which, when Bolívar gazed, had been the slave-quarters. Seeing the slaves come and go, he must have remembered the proclamations in which, nearly fifty years before Lincoln's emancipation, he, Bolívar, had made the abolition of slavery one of the principles of his great Republic of Colombia.

It had been with dying eyes that Bolívar had looked across the white yard to the slave-quarters. . . .

His vast republic was going to pieces: Venezuela and Ecuador had broken away from the Union; three countries stood where Bolívar would have had but one; and each of the three was torn with the strife of jealous factions. "Independence," Bolívar said, "is the only benefit we have gained, at the cost of everything else."

Slaves still went in and out of the quarters upon which his dimming eyes rested; and he was not to live to see them freed.

The great wealth which he had inherited had all been poured with generous passion into the cause

of freedom. He would have America freed from Spain, and slaves freed from masters.

Independence for the Spanish-American colonies . . . that had been achieved; but Bolívar, looking across the yard, beyond the slave-quarters, to the spreading shade of a lavender-flowered tamarind-tree stirring in that December trade-wind, Bolívar could testify at what cost!

He knew battle and massacre, bayonets and gallows and guns; for the years of struggle had been bloody cruel years, in which neither side gave mercy or quarter.

While the sun and the tamarind-tree collaborated to make a quivering mosaic of light and shadow on the bare earth, Bolívar must have gazed, as I did; gazed, closed his eyes, and opened them to gaze again; while through his fevered brain there must have passed the unforgettable events of the Revolution: the earthquake of 1812, the panic and horror which let Caracas fall again into the hands of the royalists; the siege of Cartagena; his declaration of "war to the death," which he was later to regret and to rescind; the glorious intoxicating day when he was first hailed as Liberator; defeat again, and the twenty days of that wretched retreat from Caracas, that "emigration of 1814," with its starvation, its fevers, its painful fleeing in the rain; the terrible

march over the Andes when every horse had perished on the way, that march which he might well feel exceeded in difficulty the surmounting of the Alps by Hannibal or Napoleon.

But painful marches and privation and danger were the chosen part of the luxuriously reared Bolívar: and his was the nature which ignored hardship and peril, which recognized no defeat but the enmity of his own people.

So in those last eleven days of his life, spent at this sugar *hacienda* three miles out of Santa Marta, his mind would have dwelt rather upon triumphs than upon hardships; in reliving the victorious battle of Boyacá, the anguished scaling of the Andes would have been subordinated, while he lingered in detail upon his triumphal entry into Bogotá after that decisive battle.

Reflecting, Bolívar would have seen his life fall into two distinct epochs: the epoch of success which culminated in the independence of South America; and the epoch of failure which was his attempt to establish self-government in the newly liberated countries.

In the years of struggle against Spain nothing had dashed his dauntless spirit, soaring blithely in the heaven of his dream of an America freed by Simón Bolívar.

But, with the realization of that dream, had come the vision of a vast united South American nation, whose safety he believed to lie only in a strongly centralized government; any federal government, he felt convinced, was too weak to guide the destiny of so heterogeneous a population, at that time completely inexperienced in the administration of its own affairs.

But this second dream of Bolívar's was not popular; it raised up for him a horde of clamorous enemies. "He desired for himself absolute sovereignty," they declared; charging him with being "mean and contemptible; a self-seeker; vain and ambitious; greedy for flattery." His own country, Venezuela, refused even to treat with Colombia while the dangerous Bolívar remained on its soil.

All this had scorched his very soul, for he longed above all things for the homage of his countrymen.

He had seen Napoleon crowned in Paris in 1804. The crown he had thought a showy bauble; but the universal acclaim had led him to write: "That made me think of the slavery of my country, and of the glory which he who should free it would conquer. But how far was I from imagining that such fortune awaited me!"

This craving for homage seems to have been Bolívar's one personal ambition. Together with a sin-

cere passion to free his downtrodden people, it possessed him.

"Bolívar," the Spanish general Morillo used to say, "Bolívar is the Revolution."

He had been that from the beginning. None knew it better than Bolívar himself, as, with body and fortune and restless soaring spirit all spent, he lay dying at the sugar plantation of San Pedro Alejandrino.

It was all recorded in his failing brain, all the way back to the beginning, to the death from yellow fever of his lovely Spanish bride, leaving him at nineteen a childless widower.

"But for the death of my wife," he had written, "I should not have made my second visit to Europe, nor have made such study of the world of men and of things which served me in the course of my political career. In Caracas or San Mateo there would not have been born in me those ideas which I acquired in my travels. The death of my wife put me early in the path of politics."

If Bolívar was the Revolution, then in his person the Revolution was born in Caracas on July 24, 1783; born of aristocratic parents and christened Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad.

This child who was to be the Revolution developed

into a slender man, incredibly slender and of medium height, with a figure "delicate, elegant, and martial"; a man whose face was of "extraordinary genius, of immense intelligence, and of profound thought"; a face in which, when the large mouth with its long upper lip smiled, it revealed beautiful and well-cared-for teeth; a face terrible in its quick anger, which was, however, of short duration, giving place almost immediately to the grave tranquillity of a repose lit by brilliant, keen, penetrating eagle eyes, deeply black.

Such were the eyes which, grown tragic with melancholy despair, had gazed dimly through the window, to old slave-quarters and a tamarind-tree; gazing past the deserted sugar-mill, in front of which I had encountered the child giving orders to a wing-clipped bird whose plumage was yellow and blue and red.

It was the personality of this Simón Bolívar that I had sought as I wandered through the rooms . . .

The place was very quiet, immersed in the sunshine of late afternoon. What had been once a busy sugar *hacienda*, with slaves coming and going, was now one of the many shrines of Bolívar; but about it still clung that great personality which had dominated to the end, the colorful spirit of a man to

whom none could be indifferent, who was as ardently loved as he was hated; a man of singular charm and talent and magnetism; a man adored by women.

Those who knew this vivid Bolívar, this man who was the Revolution, describe him as having the bearing of a distinguished man of the world; as having been far-sighted and singularly keen of hearing; as having been recklessly generous and hospitable, although so simple in his food that he would often dine at home and then go late to a banquet where he would be supreme as toast-master. They say also that he drank with moderation; that, although the son of a country where even the infants smoke, he did not smoke at all; and that he very early gave up gambling. They tell us that he was as much at home in French literature as in Spanish, as well as being familiar with Italian and English authors; and that of them all it was Voltaire who was so greatly his favorite that he had memorized innumerable passages from his works.

And the men who knew Bolívar describe him further as a tireless dancer, a wonderful horseman, a daring mountain-climber; they say that he could use either hand equally well in sword-play and that he was able to swim with his arms tied.

Bolívar talked much and with a dazzling vivacity. "The ideas of the Liberator," some one wrote, "are

like his imagination, full of fire, original and new." He could electrify men and, like Napoleon, possessed the magic of persuasion.

Santander, one of the bitterest of his enemies, begged publicly before the Assembly that Bolívar be forbidden to attend the Convention at Ocana; saying that "Such is the influence and the secret force of his will that I myself upon infinite occasions have opposed him full of fury, and upon seeing and hearing him, he has disarmed me so that I have departed full of admiration. No one can contradict General Bolívar face to face."

"The flame," said the Duke of Manchester, after meeting this eager glowing Bolívar, "the flame has consumed the oil."

And there are anecdotes to illustrate these descriptions.

There is the story of the banquet at Angostura, where Bolívar, proposing a toast to dramatize his sentiments, had mounted the table, his small, slight, nervous figure pacing it from end to end, while he exclaimed, "Thus will I go from the Atlantic to the Pacific until an end is made of the last Spaniard!"

There are tales, too, of how he would sing on the march, or recite the verses and the prose of those authors whom he loved. We are told that on those exhausting marches he would sing patriotic songs



. . . yet I cannot help fancying that the Bolívar, who was a "tireless dancer and adored by women," sang also the love-songs and the dances of his native land; those songs which are the incarnated spirit of Spanish South America, the songs he must have heard from his nurse, songs in which the Spanish and the Indian blended to form a new music, as with pain their blood had blended to create a new race.

In that music there is Spaniard and Moor, Indian and African. It is at once pagan and deeply religious, the music of abandon, yet profoundly sad, with a wistful hesitation, a heartbreaking catching of the breath. It was the music of Bolívar's childhood, and it was inevitable that as he sang upon the march he should in the austere lonely beauty of the Andes have sung the songs of the land whose Liberator he had set himself to be.

And then there is the story of Manuela Saenz, born more than a hundred years ago in Quito, a girl of great beauty and of amazingly masculine habits, having headed a squadron of cavalry to put down some sort of disturbance in Quito. It was almost a foregone conclusion that such a girl should have fallen in love with Bolívar, under whose protection she used to ride about Lima with an escort of Colombian cavalry, she wearing a gold-laced scarlet dolman and white breeches.

It was this Manuela who, when in Bogotá assassins were crying, "Death to the tyrant!" at Bolívar's very door, was able to convince him that resistance was hopeless and to persuade him to drop from the balcony and to flee through the streets; while she stayed to throw his would-be murderers off the scent, by declaring that Bolívar was in the hall of the Council of State, and thus giving him time to make his escape.

Many years later, more than twenty years after Bolívar's death at the *hacienda* of San Pedro Alejandrino, Garibaldi spent a day with Manuela at the little port of Paita on the arid coast of Peru. Writing of her he says: "Doña Manuelita Saenz was the most graceful and courteous matron I ever saw. Having enjoyed the friendship of Bolívar, she was acquainted with the minutest details of the life of the great Liberator . . . I parted from her deeply touched."

Roaming from room to room of the house where Bolívar had come to die, I wondered why it was that Manuela had not been with him. Wandering, standing before this and that; pausing before portraits of his fellow-patriots . . . before the desk he had used, the chest of drawers, the chair . . . before a framed photograph of a painting of his marriage in Madrid to the lovely little María Teresa de Toro . . . before

the death certificate stating that Simón Bolívar had died on December 17, 1830 . . . lingering before a crisply black lock of his hair cut one hour and forty minutes later . . . before his miniature . . . and before a copy of his will. . . .

It was here that they had brought him to die. The sailing-vessel on which he had taken passage for Jamaica had put into Santa Marta, as Bolívar was too ill to continue the voyage; and because he found the close air of the town so suffocating Joaquín de Mier had put at his disposal his house at San Pedro Alejandrino.

Not long before, Bolívar had written to a friend, "I have scarce breath enough to carry me through the last days which remain to me of my mortification."

In the room to which I so often returned to look, as Bolívar had looked, across to the slave-quarters and the tamarind-tree, that scanty breath had ebbed; and there seven days before his death he had dictated to a secretary his last proclamation:

I have been the victim of my persecutors who have conducted me to the door of the sepulcher. . . . On disappearing from the midst of you my affection tells me that I must manifest my last desires . . . I aspire to no other glory than the consolidation of Colombia . . . my last vows are for the happiness of the country. If my death contributes to the cessation of division, I shall descend tranquil to the grave.

I had made many times the circuit of the still, deserted rooms, about which hovered that departed personality, before I had come out to walk under the tamarinds and the mangos, where I discovered the macaw which, wing-clipped and hobbling awkwardly, nevertheless remained brilliantly yellow and red and blue; repeating in its plumage the strong clear colors of the flag of the free Republic of Colombia which floated above the death-place of Bolívar.

“*Ven, Guaca,*” the child commanded, brandishing a stick over the proud, high-flying thing now brought to earth. “*Ven, Guaca*” . . .

## CHAPTER XV

### IN AND OUT OF ANTIOQUIA

**H**E gravitated toward us as though some irresistible force impelled his shy reluctant feet, compelling them to bring him the length of that upper veranda of the Hotel Magdalena at Puerto Berrío.

We bore the indefinable air of those whose language is English, and Jim was hungry for his own speech: for of course his name was Jim; it could n't have been anything else, he being the young, eager blond creature that he was. And his last name . . . equally of course, to that sort of person, a last name does n't matter.

"I wonder," he began, by way of opening the conversation, "I wonder if you're interested in birds? . . . Then," he looked at his watch, "in twenty minutes you're going to see a sight. . . . You know, I thought you'd be interested. Every night they come and roost in these palm-trees . . . thousands of them. You'll see. They'll come just after the hotel turns on its lights. I've been here off and on

some fifteen times in the last year, and they 've never failed me yet. You could set a clock by them."

Jim drew up a chair, as though, since we were to wait together for the birds, we were already friends.

But we must excuse his appearance: he was just as he'd ridden in four days from the mine, to get the train at Porcecito; a fool expressman had by mistake put his stuff on an up-river boat; he 'd been in Puerto Berrío eight days, waiting for it to come back; and you couldn't buy much in the village, outside of sandals and guitars and tin dishes. But he had a celluloid collar . . . did I know what a wonderful thing a celluloid collar was? He demonstrated its merits: it could be sponged off every night.

Yes, he was a miner . . . had n't we guessed that?

Contemplating him, I admitted that we might have guessed it; especially as the Department of Antioquia, half-way up the Magdalena River, is the great mining region of Colombia, where, even before the Spaniards, Indians had worked mines, which are said still to produce more gold than all the rest of South America.

It seemed therefore fitting that our first acquaintance in Antioquia should be a miner, even though he did happen also to be a gringo, instead of a native. And Jim in his poetic impulsive youngness, lent

himself to symbolism, becoming easily the essence of Antioquia, rather than a one hundred per cent gringo.

"Oh," he was saying, "there's gold everywhere . . . in the mountains and the rivers. The natives are born miners and prospectors, but there are plenty of foreigners, too, mining here in Antioquia——"

He broke off as though that waked some unwelcome memory, and returned to the subject of the swallows which in a few moments would come to roost in the palms.

"There!" . . . If we looked very high we could see tiny black specks, like motes; revolving motes . . . high in the sky.

And then the lights went on: powerful electric lights flashing all along the upper and the lower verandas which inclose the Hotel Magdalena; flashing also in the upper and lower galleries of the patio which makes of the hotel a hollow square.

The lights blazed, for the hotel is prodigal of electricity; and the distant motes became nearer, all the time nearer, and more numerous, until at last they were seen to be truly birds; thousands of little birds dark against the sky. Soon they were close enough for us to hear that as they circled and whirled they incessantly called, as if in their dizzy

downward whirl they were crying out to prevent one from colliding with another.

Thus they circled and wheeled and twittered, always nearer, and then suddenly down in a great swift dip, flying straight and unhesitating to the three palms in front of the hotel.

The palm-fronds bent beneath their weight, as though a great wind had manifested itself in the shape of thousands of slate-colored swallows with mottled brown breasts.

Their fluttering little figures filled the leaves, where for an hour they kept up a ceaseless chatter before at last settling themselves in close rows.

A fellow-traveler, a padre, picked up one luckless bird which in the speed of its descent had flown against the wall of the veranda. He brought it over to us, laying the stunned and terrified little creature in one of Jim's strong mining hands. It lay there quivering, while Jim, quite unconscious of us or of the padre, soothed and petted and reassured its throbbing little form, placing it finally ever so gently on the railing, his hand hovering protectingly for a moment before he slowly withdrew it.

After just a minute's hesitation, the little swallow was off into the dusk.

"Trying his wings," said Jim.

"Yes, and his nerve."



We spoke softly, as one does when some faculty is intensely concentrated; for all our eyes strained into the dusk, following the little figure out, and back to its final perch on the palm-tree.

Again, this time in the glare of the dining-room crowded with men—traveling salesmen and promoters and miners—awaiting up- and down-river boats, or catching the morning train to Medellín, Jim at once joined us at the table.

He had a story of trouble; of his all, invested in a mine, only to find later that he had purchased the mine's debts as well as the mine. His contract had been made with foreigners, Europeans; a man and his wife; who had handled the thing so shrewdly that it was impossible to get them, either under the Colombian or the United States law.

He went into detail, describing the night when he'd confronted them with their fraud and had sworn, "You'll never snare another, for you'll have a mountain to pass . . . and I'm that mountain."

He dwelt upon that. When you've been ignominiously cheated, it is comforting to think of yourself as an impassable mountain.

After he'd warned them, he'd gone out of the house; out over the trail to Hanson's; a trail that

men did n't care about traveling, even by day. It had been late when he knocked at Hanson's door.

"Who is it?"

"It 's Jim."

And Hanson had opened.

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"No."

"I 'll call the cook."

When Jim had eaten, Hanson put the question:

"Where are your animals?"

"I walked."

After they 'd smoked a long time Hanson remarked, "I 've seen six come out of that house before, but I never saw one come quiet like you."

Hanson had lent him a mule and had then followed him to take away his gun. "If you go with a gun, Jim," he 'd said, "they 'll swear your life away."

Jim told us the story in great detail, apparently finding nothing inadequate in the laconic sympathy of Hanson. Jim himself would never be limited in the expression of sympathy; the swallow could testify to that; but he accepted the world of miners as he found it, and Hanson he thought to be a fine fellow who 'd lent him a mule and cautioned him about the gun.

From time to time in the telling of the story, Jim had declared "No, figures don't lie, but liars figure." He represented himself as having said it many times to that woman who knew how to evade so many laws; that woman back there at the mine four days by mule from the railroad.

Then once more he swiftly shifted the talk to the swallows.

We were leaving in the morning by the Medellín train? Then he wouldn't see us again, for when we returned he'd be off down the river. But we must watch for the birds when we came back; he'd guarantee that we'd be able to set a clock by them; and in the morning we must be sure to see them go; they'd be leaving before the Medellín train went out.

Nearly a year later there came to us in New York a letter from this Jim in which, with no word of bankruptcy or mining swindles, he wrote, "You have probably forgotten who I am, but you will remember when I tell you that together we watched the swallows come to roost in the palm-trees at Puerto Berrío."

And I am sure that Jim will forgive the telling of his tale, for after all isn't that the only way I can help him to become that impassable "mountain"?

The hotel at Puerto Berrío stands on a bluff above the river and above the little village. From the village at night it looks like a great ship with upper and lower decks ablaze with light. In the dark little streets, which stop suddenly because if they did not they would run into the river, the hotel seems a thing apart, a thing which has nothing to do with life as it is lived in a village whose streets pass so quietly between rows of one-storied, two-roomed little houses, in whose doorways men, women, and children smoke in the warm gentle night.

After one has been traveling about Colombia, the plumbing of the Hotel Magdalena seems almost ostentatious, like too many jewels. I have never seen anything like it south of the Panama Canal Zone. It flaunts its white tiles and its nickel-plated fixtures. Great fuzzy moths flounder about in the little pools left after needle- and shower-baths; for not only are these baths wonderful to behold, but they actually work; quite unlike the hotel in Girardot which sends a small boy through incoming trains to distribute printed slips announcing that the hotel offers plumbing which operates night and day; slips which should read, "neither night nor day."

It was in meditating upon the Hotel Magdalena that I came to realize that the great contribution

of the United States to the civilization of the world rests upon the part we have played in the advancement of plumbing. And, using the word figuratively, to include all sanitation and preventive medicine, plumbing becomes an achievement and a contribution worthy of a place beside art and letters.

At this Hotel Magdalena, not only does the plumbing work all night, but throughout the night the electric lights of verandas and galleries blaze, and great fans in the ceilings unflaggingly whirl. And all night the station bell rings the hours, the village employing shifts of men to do the ringing, waking with exasperating regularity the would-be sleeper who wonders why villagers must know the night hours, when by day they are perfectly content to have the station bell busy with other matters. Then at half-past four the bells of the little church at the foot of the bluff are clamorous about mass; soon after, a puffing, whistling locomotive makes up the morning train, and as tracks and station are also at the foot of the bluff, sleep is definitely banished, and there is no possible excuse for missing that daily train to Medellín.

And so we rose to ring for coffee, wondering all over again how the South American does with so little sleep; for always the days of the traveler begin

thus early, and always the night is an interrupted performance.

But with the coffee came the rewarding dawn.

From the veranda on the height of the bluff at Puerto Berrío I watched the pale eastern light slowly spread above the blue horizon clouds.

Waiting until the train should be ready, I sat looking out over the river, my pencil almost without direction recording the scene.

It wrote that the three palms dripped with whispering birds; that a rooster crowed; that a renewed clang of bells crashed into the dawn; that the sky grew faintly pink behind the jungle, while electric lights still burned, but with all their dazzle put out by the rosy sky; and that the river suddenly separated itself from the dark line of the forest and gleamed in the pink glow.

“The birds in the palms,” it wrote, “linger, talking very softly, as if not yet quite awake. The light fast deepens and spreads. There is the rooster, far off. Men walk about the veranda in their pajamas; and there is the odor of black coffee. Now roosters are crowing everywhere. The electric lights seem quite silly in the flooding day which comes up across the river; the day shows us how the birds sit in close rows along the ribs of the palm-leaves, how they stretch their wings, and how at last

they rise in a dark cloud from the palms, whose leaves spring back, released from the multiplication of their tiny weights."

The train led us at once through jungle, where steaming mist lay over the trees, and where, when we stopped to take wood, mist shrouded the bamboo huts. From the depths of the forest a distant bird whistled, something very near sweetly piped, and there was an answering whistle, before we started off again in the fog.

When the sun had dispelled the mist we saw that it was through green tropic country that the railroad out of Puerto Berrío has cut its path, a country whose sparse population clings to that right of way which the road maintains, despite all the efforts of an encroaching jungle.

It is a mulatto population, living for the most part in hut villages along the line, even their cemeteries utilizing the railroad clearing, where little wooden crosses, generally painted black, mark the graves; villages and graves alike standing in single file along the track.

Gold-bearing streams foam over stones under dense overhanging vegetation, under great ferns and vine-decked flowering trees. Sometimes bridges cross these streams; a mossy log linking the banks,

a plank suspended from the trees, or merely two lengths of slippery bamboo. The water which rushes under the bridges is red, and if there is a trail up the forested hillside, that too is red.

From this zone of tropics and mulattos we climbed up into open rolling pastoral country, where the rivers have lost their ruddy color, and flow as clearly calm as though they kept no tryst with caressing ferns and shadowy overarching trees, through which the sunlight will filter, to dance on glinting copper.

We climbed to a green valley, down to which the river Nus cascades in a series of seven great falls; up to Limón, the end of the line on the Puerto Berrío side of the Pass, where the trains dump their passengers and their freight.

Some day there will be a tunnel through the mountain which separates Limón from Santiago, on the other side of the Pass; but now rickety horse-drawn carriages, high surreys, stage-coaches to which mules are harnessed, mule-carts, automobiles, and motor-buses bridge the hiatus between the terminals.

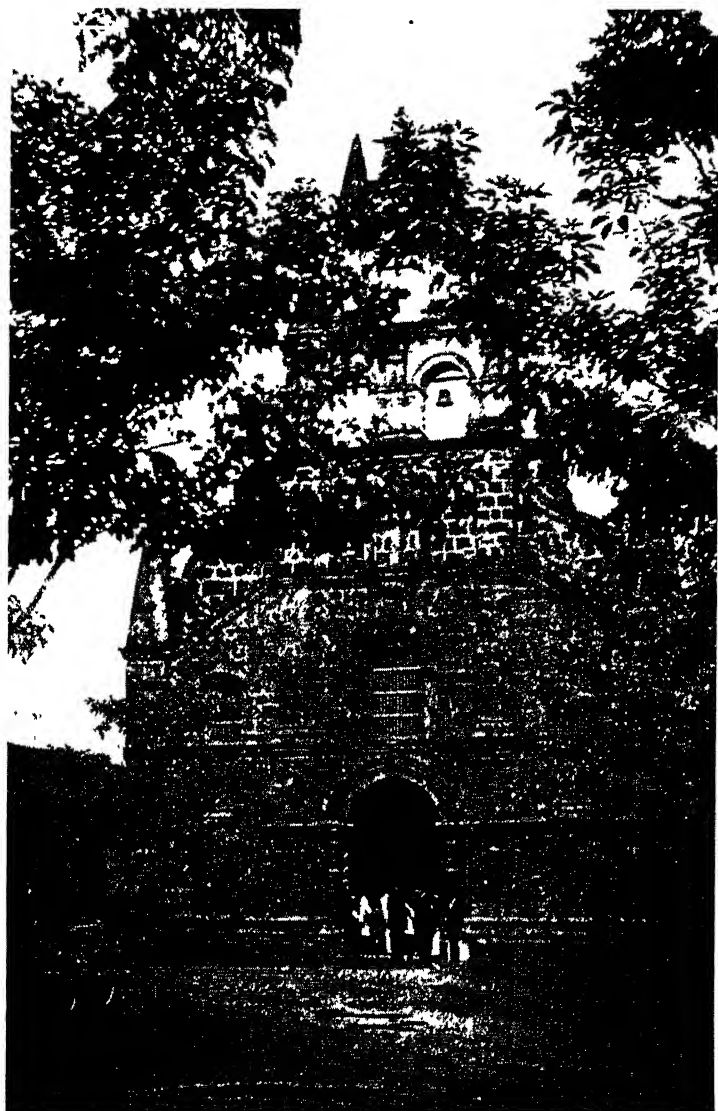
Little streams tumble across the road which winds up and over La Quiebra; the road of many carts; for all that enters or leaves Antioquia must journey this way. The short stretch of railroad from Medellín to Amagá cannot be counted, since it makes no connection with the outside world, simply



tapping a section of the coal and coffee district. One day . . . in ambitious Colombia they are fond of saying what is to happen one day . . . one day the Amagá railway may be continued to the head of navigation on the upper Cauca. Antioquia will then have an outlet through the fertile agricultural valley of the Cauca, by Cali to Buenaventura on the Pacific coast of Colombia, that rainy steaming little port of Buenaventura which we had visited two years before on our way to Ecuador.

But that road is still a dream, and Antioquia's coffee destined for Europe and North America, is carted over the Pass of Quiebra, down to the waiting trains which convey it to the port of Puerto Berrío, whence it proceeds by the slow way of the Magdalena river-boats. Thus every year are 185,000 bags, of 138 pounds each, hauled in carts over the Pass. These carts return loaded with boxes and crates of manufactured articles, containing everything from a Paris hat to a piano or an automobile.

In company with such going and coming carts we climbed to the top at five thousand feet, and then down over a serpentine road to Santiago on the other side, where coffee-sacks were coming in on the backs of oxen; pouring in as though the supply of both oxen and coffee were endless.



DEVOUT MEDELLIN



We had not been many minutes on the train which took us out of Santiago before we realized that Antioquia is one thing on the Limón side of the Pass and quite another on the Medellín side. We had left behind the steaming tropical forest and entered into high temperate sunshine, into a fertile landscape from which it was easy to infer the character of the population.

Antioquia beyond La Quiebra is a revelation of what may happen in a climate of everlasting spring, well out of range of death-dealing mosquitos; a revelation of what may happen when under such conditions a people aspire to the democratic ideal of living each upon his own property. For the climate has bred a healthy race, free from the fevers and lassitude of the hot country, while the system of small landholdings has stimulated ambition, thrift, and industry. And from the train window the result may be read.

We passed through a mountainous country, where the central Cordilleras are broken into great rolling hills and vast valleys; through the trim tidy villages of these valleys, villages of white houses and white cathedrals; and through tidy farms where milk-white cattle with black velvet-lined ears grazed on green fields. We stopped at concrete red-tiled stations, surrounded by gardens of heliotrope and

geranium, hibiscus and rose, where water trickled in little concrete fountains.

It did not seem quite real, this landscape which was as immaculate as Europe and as undefiled by advertisements as the jungle.

Colombia is as proud of Antioquia as of the Cauca Valley, for in Antioquia, in spite of the transportation difficulties, the country has achieved its greatest industrial development.

Every Colombian you meet insists that you must see the Departamento de Antioquia, with its capital at Medellín.

It is a great department with an area of 24,000 square miles and a population of 817,000. Medellín, they will tell you, has 80,000 inhabitants, and in all South America few cities of its size possess such wealth. Nowhere are the girls so beautiful, and nowhere are the people so energetic. You will also be told of the vague tradition that they are descended from converted Jews who long ago emigrated to this section of Colombia. And of course your mind will be a chaotic maze of figures about the coffee and gold output, about breweries and iron-works, cotton and cloth mills, and factories for the manufacture of soap and shoes and glass

and candles; everything in fact, but “. . . ships and sealing-wax.”

So you will go into Antioquia, as I did, quite unprepared for the beauty of the mountain-tumbled country, and for the pastoral peace which so dominates factories and mills that Antioquia beyond the Pass becomes for you a psalm of “green pastures and still waters.”

Through the city of Medellín a river ripples under big lovely trees which hang their lavender blossoms over the water; and on each side of the street which follows this river are houses set in gardens.

There is a white cathedral with towers; there is the old church of Vera Cruz with the flat façade of colonial days; and there are great new churches in Romanesque style, built of the brilliant red brick of Antioquia. And at Sunday mass these churches overflow into the streets, where many who cannot enter kneel devoutly.

Being a Latin-American city, there is of course a tiny park in honor of Bolívar, a square where flowers bloom as though blooming were an event instead of a perennial performance.

Pretty girls in light dresses and big hats go about with a freedom unknown in Bogotá or Cartagena. There are even girls in business, bobbed-haired señoritas sitting in cashiers' desks or acting as

stenographers, all with a brisk air of independence.

The breakfast-boys who carry the "eleven o'clocks" to offices and shops have any exposed food protected by wire covers. Even in a poor shop near the railroad yards, waiting glasses of milk were covered with a long slab of glass.

One day a barefoot servant with her black hair in hanging braids came into the hotel dining-room bearing a gift, strawberries arranged on a silver tray, covered by a wire cone, and surrounded by red camellias.

In Medellín there are certain characteristic sounds: the sharp clink of horses' hoofs over the small well-laid cobbles; and the voice of Antioquia. The voice which comes in through the windows of the hotel is unlike any other in Colombia, unlike the careless rapid slur of the coast or the rising melody of Bogotá. The voice of Medellín is the voice of that mango-vender who had seemed to me so singularly out of key with easy-going Cartagena. Listening to those imperious staccato cries of Medellín, I realized that beyond doubt my mango-man came from the progressive Department of Antioquia, whose voice is the voice of command, as Bogotá speaks with the tongue of persuasion, while the coast is wistfully dreamy, crying charcoal as though it were a dirge, melancholy sweet.







WHEN THE CATHEDRAL OVERFLOWS

We went one night to hear the Spanish poet Villasespa read his verses to a select audience; we covered the route of the electric car lines; we drove to all the suburbs; and we wandered much about the poor quarters of the city, following the Medellín River, dark and cool under its willows, to the outskirts where negroes live in the neatest imaginable little one- or two-roomed houses, each with its tiny vegetable garden and its microscopic veranda, gay with purple bougainvillea, or with coral vines in pink bloom.

Laundry work often hangs to dry in these verandas, but the flowers which blossom about the houses are the same as those about the more pompous mansions of the rich; for every negro cottage has its glory of crimson hibiscus, of waxy red or white camellias, of carnations and of every rose that ever made June the month of brides.

Even the railroad yards in Medellín are tidy and flowery.

In Bell's invaluable "Commercial and Industrial Handbook of Colombia," I had read that in the city of Medellín it is the custom for servants and laborers to buy their homes on the instalment plan.

Strolling about, looking for slums and finding none, impressed everywhere with the sense of a calmly ordered civilization, I wondered. . . .

On the way out of Antioquia we stopped off to visit a famous placer gold-mine where water brought down from the hills was washing out the bed of the deflected Porce River. And there we ran into an encampment of importunate Gipsies in full, figured skirts, with flowered aprons and necklaces of silver dollars.

Our deviation from the regular routine of travel brought us by night to the terminus at Santiago, where each native who crowded about the train was equipped with a swinging lantern, by the light of which he insisted upon establishing us and our belongings in the motor which we had ordered to take us over the Pass.

In a blackness as of midnight we climbed the deserted road, so populous by day. We wound and climbed, splashing darkly through streams; winding past motionless deserted carts, waiting for the morning when men and animals would give them life; winding thus solitary among abandoned carts, up to the top, and down to the glimmering lanterns of Limón; down to the spotless hotel, where, because it was not the custom to spend a night, we were the only guests to be lulled to sleep by cascades leaping down a mountain with that soft foamy roar, which is somehow quieter than silence.

On the following day we completed the journey back to Puerto Berrío, which is the exit as well as the entrance of Antioquia; passing again through the region of alternate jungle and mulatto settlements.

I recall pausing for wood at one of those little settlements.

It was dusk. Between two thatched huts a small sketchily clad boy, perhaps twelve years old, sat on a log eating his supper from a tin plate balanced on his thin yellow knees. Beside him on the log a hopefully patient black and white cat watched with unblinking eyes his every mouthful. The boy finished the meal. No, the cat was going to get nothing, not even the scraps. The child took his plate into the hut and delivered it to the woman who served him.

He stalked out; turned back; "surely," the cat thought; but the boy returned only to get his cane, which was a length of young bamboo, cut down by the river's brink. Then, cane in hand, and still masticating, he strode magnificently over the railroad ties.

Now that his meal was over, he would see the world; and the train is the world to those settlements clustered at intervals along the line.

*"A ver la cola . . . la cerveza!"* The children

walked up and down under the car windows, crying their tepid bottled drinks; cola and beer.

The train moved off, and candles began to show their flickering light through the crevices of bamboo walls; while the little picture of that dominant male, with his cane and his scorn of cat and of woman, remained to make me smile, until it momentarily faded, while I wondered whether we should be too late to see the coming of the swallows . . . Jim's swallows . . . to the palms of the Hotel Magdalena; that hotel which was just the sort of place you'd expect to find at the doorway of enterprising Antioquia.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### INSCRUTABLE DOORS

**I**T was Sunday morning and our first day in Bogotá. In chill misty drizzle we walked, unprotected across the bare plaza of Bolívar upon which our hotel fronted, across to the shops on the opposite side of the square. Because we had flown from the Caribbean coast to the terminus of the railway by which one climbs to the high plateau, and because in Colombia one flies by weight, we had left in Barranquilla most of our possessions, including umbrellas.

We hurried therefore across the plaza to the shops, where, to be sure, there were umbrellas, but at a cost astonishingly out of proportion to their value.

Why? we questioned as we examined critically a clumsy cotton affair with a great hooked handle.

But umbrellas were not manufactured in Colombia, the salesman explained. This one had come all the way from Spain. It was not, however, the ocean voyage which was responsible for the price, but the slow shipment from the coast to the interior.

Because we had flown we did not yet fully appre-

ciate the tedious stages of that up-river journey, which we were later to experience in detail, and which we now saw, as it were, through the eyes of a clumsy cotton umbrella.

Landing at Puerto Colombia it had been transferred from ship to railway, and at Barranquilla from freight-car to river-boat, in which it had slowly struggled up against the swift current of the Magdalena to La Dorada—six days, eight, ten; almost any number of days if the water were low, and running aground a frequent calamity. The mails would when possible be rushed through to La Dorada in six days, but an umbrella was only freight and might be delayed on the lower river an indefinite time.

At La Dorada the umbrella, upon whose purchase we had now decided, had been again transferred, this time to the railroad around the rapids to Beltrán, where it again journeyed by river to Girardot, there to be carried up that long flight of steps from the river to the freight-car in which it had climbed the Andes to Factativá; and, because of a difference in gage, it was again transferred, this time to the Sabana line by which it had finally arrived at Bogotá.

The umbrella at any price was clearly a bargain, under the protection of which we set forth to explore this inaccessible capital of a vast country.

We went first from church to church; into the huge and crowded cathedral; into the church of San Ignacio de Loyola, where a sign urges the pious for the love of God not to defile His temple by expectoration; into Santa Clara, lovely with its richly decorated ceiling and its walls thickly lined with paintings, dark and mellow in their heavy gold frames; and into the church of El Carmen, where a kneeling man beat his breast under his poncho.

At glittering far altars gorgeous priestly robes were busy about the ritual of the church. Voices intoned. There was the confused murmur of worshipping response; the movement and very faintly the click of beads slipped along rosaries; there was incense and many candles; oh, so many candles blazing in churches, where the devout knelt to the very doors.

At noon, when mass was over, the shops closed for the day, drawing their heavy iron gratings and turning the keys in their great padlocks. Then suddenly every one seemed to disappear, shopkeepers and customers and the crowds which had thronged the churches.

It was then that I first realized Bogotá as a city of inscrutable doors.

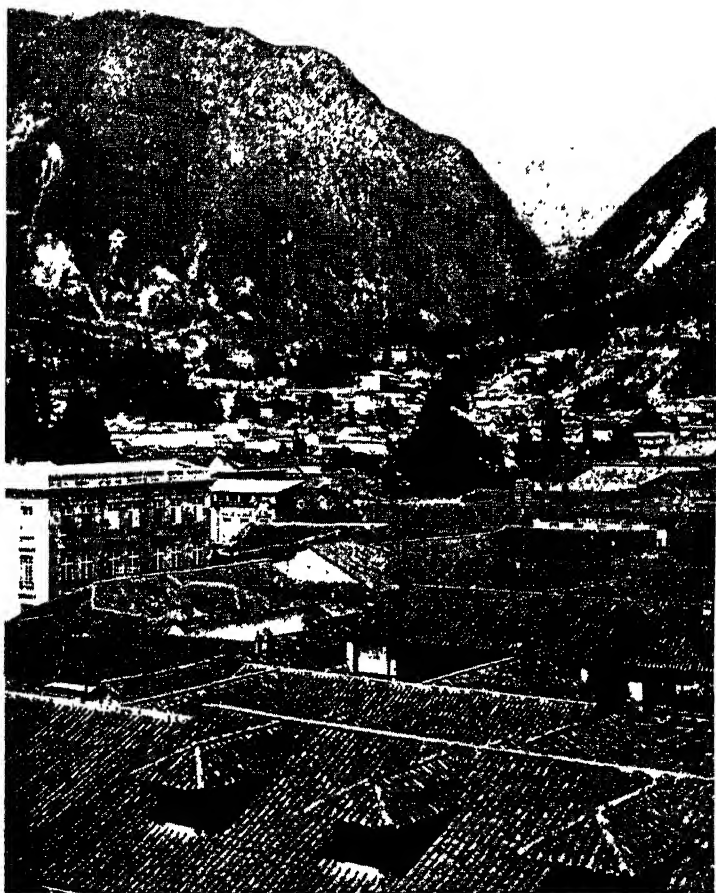
We returned to the hotel for midday breakfast in a quiet cold little dining-room where bowls of



roses and sweet peas glowed, while the conversation of promoters was called from table to table; a hotel whose salon was adorned with photographs of Lord Kitchener and of their Majesties. And in that salon one might shiver over magazines describing the costumes of Lady This and Duchess That at functions which had months ago passed into history.

In the afternoon we walked again about Bogotá, now with the umbrella crooked over one arm, for although the drizzle was over, we could not be sure whether the day was gray in memory or in prophecy. We walked under the colonnade of the imposing Capitol, a building on so grand a scale that it dwarfs even the cathedral. We discovered little parks and visited many churches, each with some distinctive quality which fixed it in the memory; as Santa Clara will always be to us the church of many pictures, so La Tercera remains as the church of beautiful carving, Las Nieves the church of simplicity, and Las Aguas the church of age.

We explored, doing nothing in detail, but forming those first impressions which precede intimate study. And as there seems to be in existence no such thing as a guide-book of Bogotá, our explorations were necessarily discoveries. We learned by walking about the city that it is laid out in *calles*, running east and west, intersected at right angles by *carreras*



ROOFS OF BOGOTÁ



running north and south. We located for ourselves its tram-lines; we discovered which were the streets of jewelers and silversmiths, and where Bogotá purchases imported hats and frocks.

We strayed beyond asphalt to cobble and soon beyond cobble to mud, wandering finally to the settlement of Egipto on the slope back of the city, where the Indian population lives in tiers of thatched huts.

We discovered a three-story building from whose roof we looked down upon a red-tiled Bogotá, carved into segments by straight and narrow streets, while, above us, the church of Monserrate crowns one of the two peaks at whose feet Bogotá nestles.

We descended again into the city, passing occasional youths with guitars, and pausing in the park of Santander to watch the men who sat at little tables playing chess in the cold shadow of tall funereal evergreens, which surround the statue of Santander, as in Cartagena royal palms assemble to do honor to an equestrian Bolívar. And the trees of the Parque de Santander are dark, as the costumes of Bogotá's inhabitants are dark, in contrast to the light and the whiteness of tropical cities.

We had come—flown—from those tropics where doors stand open and people gather on balconies and behind window-gratings, seeking the breeze.

Here we wandered through *calle* and to *carrera* and back to *calle*, past closed curtained windows and inscrutable doors.

There were rich doors, massive and iron-studded, with high-placed knockers in the shape of hands; as well as the many smaller and more modest ones. And behind these doors had disappeared all those whose murmured worship had filled the churches.

This was Bogotá on a Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1923; nearly four hundred years after Jiménez de Quesada had founded it in the name of his king.

Cunninghame Graham's thrilling life of Quesada had vivified for me the conquest of Colombia and the early history of Bogotá. Pedro Ibañez gave me Bogotá from the first day of its existence to the end of the nineteenth century, gave it in detail and from the Colombian point of view. And I had seen through the more recent eyes of Father Zahm; of Scruggs, the American minister; and of Eder, who writes with the authority of long residence.

I could thus picture every step of the city's development, and yet as we wandered by *calle* and *carrera* past inscrutable doors I felt myself a stranger.

The air was high and cold and quiet, as though

the story of this far-away city were not one of the most stirring of all the stirring tales of America of the South, which, with its treasure of legend and tradition and history, awaits our tardy discovery.

Not until we explore Mars will there be again such adventure as the Spanish conquerors knew; adventure, that is, in the simplest sense, excluding what are after all the greatest of adventures, those of the spirit and of science.

And, in admiration of the reckless bravery and the enduring fortitude of those conquerors, one may almost forget their cruelty; for others were equally cruel, while few were so courageous.

Quesada led his men thus daringly into the unknown; into a land where plants and animals, people and language, disease and danger were all strange and therefore fearful. He set forth to conquer a realm of whose very existence he was ignorant. Yet after much pain and the loss of many of his followers he at last reached the plateau where with his remaining force of some 166 men and 80 horses he overthrew the Chibcha kingdom.

But on that long struggle from coast to interior, the Spaniards had, as they put it, "died like bugs"; for poisoned arrows and tropical diseases had been added to hunger and thirst.

It was on the slope of the protecting peaks of Monserrate and of Guadalupe that Quesada ordered his newly enslaved Indians to build twelve thatched huts, leaving a space in the center for the erection of a church; the number of the huts determined by the number of the apostles; and the location chosen because of its resemblance to the site of Quesada's early home in Spanish Granada, because it would offer easy defense and because of abundant water and good air.

When the huts were finished, it is said that Quesada, at the head of his men, marched solemnly three times around his new city, proclaiming it dedicated to the service of the king.

Such was the beginning of my Bogotá of the mysterious doors.

In the same year of its founding, just as Quesada was making ready to return to Spain for reinforcements, there occurred the most dramatic and incredible coincidence of history. Indians came to him with a tale of men coming up from the south; men whom they described as like the Spaniards, but with finer clothes and fatter horses. Quesada sent his brother to investigate, and while he awaited the result there came another rumor, this time that men, also similar to the Spaniards, were coming from the east, but that these men were dressed in skins and

that their horses were even more lean than those of Quesada.

To meet this band Quesada himself rode out at the head of his cavalry, with a soldier beating their solitary drum and Indians blowing upon conch-shells.

Thus, with all the pomp he could achieve, did Quesada meet Federman, the leader of the band which approached from Venezuela in the east.

But so ill, so fever-stricken were the hundred men who had survived Federman's march that they moved to tears even the stoic captains who under Quesada had made the painful journey from the coast, nearly a thousand miles to the plateau, overcoming as they advanced, not only the jungle, but tribes of hostile resisting Indians.

In search of food Federman had wandered three years about the great marshy *llanos*. He had seen three hundred of his four hundred men die there of hunger and fever, until finally in desperation he had undertaken to surmount the Andes, scaling those grim mountains by a route so difficult that it has never since been attempted, so precipitous that it had been necessary to haul his horses by ropes up the perilous cliffs.

Meanwhile, just six days before Quesada's meeting with this gaunt band from Venezuela, his emis-



sary was embracing Belalcazar, head of the expedition which had been reported as arriving from the south.

Belalcazar, it appeared, had been living in splendor as governor of Quito, but an Indian had poured into his ears fresh tales of that fabulous city of El Dorado, in which all Spaniards then believed, and the lure of which none could resist. And so Belalcazar had deserted the post which he held under Pizarro, to go in search of El Dorado.

As he proceeded he had overcome great territory and founded cities. And then he, too, began to hear rumors of people like himself, and of the little settlement of twelve huts, into which he finally rode, with the steel corselets of his men flashing in the sun and the plumes of their helmets flaunting as they advanced upon their sleek fat horses.

Thus in the far interior of an unmapped country, in an uncharted continent, three exploring conquerors, none of whom knew of the existence of the others, miraculously met; to remain together some months feasting and hunting, planning the Bogotá that was to be, laying out its streets and its squares and holding councils concerning their own futures. For Belalcazar and Quesada were both ambitious to return to Spain and to secure from the crown the governorships of the territory they had subdued.

To this end they had a boat constructed in which they might descend the Magdalena to Cartagena, from which port they would set sail for Spain. Bogotá was busy with their preparations, with the sale of their slaves, their guns, and their horses, and with the farewell speeches of Quesada, who was addicted to rhetoric. And upon their arrival in Cartagena they created a deep sensation. No one had ever heard of Bogotá or of the Chibcha kingdom, and Quesada had been so long gone that all believed him dead. Now wild tales of the riches of the interior possessed little Cartagena, and crowds followed the three conquerors about the streets praying to enlist under their banners.

But they sailed away to Spain, there to part forever, and Quesada to drift for twelve years over Europe before returning to Colombia; for enemies at court intriguing against him brought about his banishment.

Thus the foundation of twelve huts was left to work out its own destiny. A year after its founding the arrival of six Spanish women is recorded, and there is record of the first woman to make a loaf of wheat bread in Bogotá and of the first wedding performed in the city.

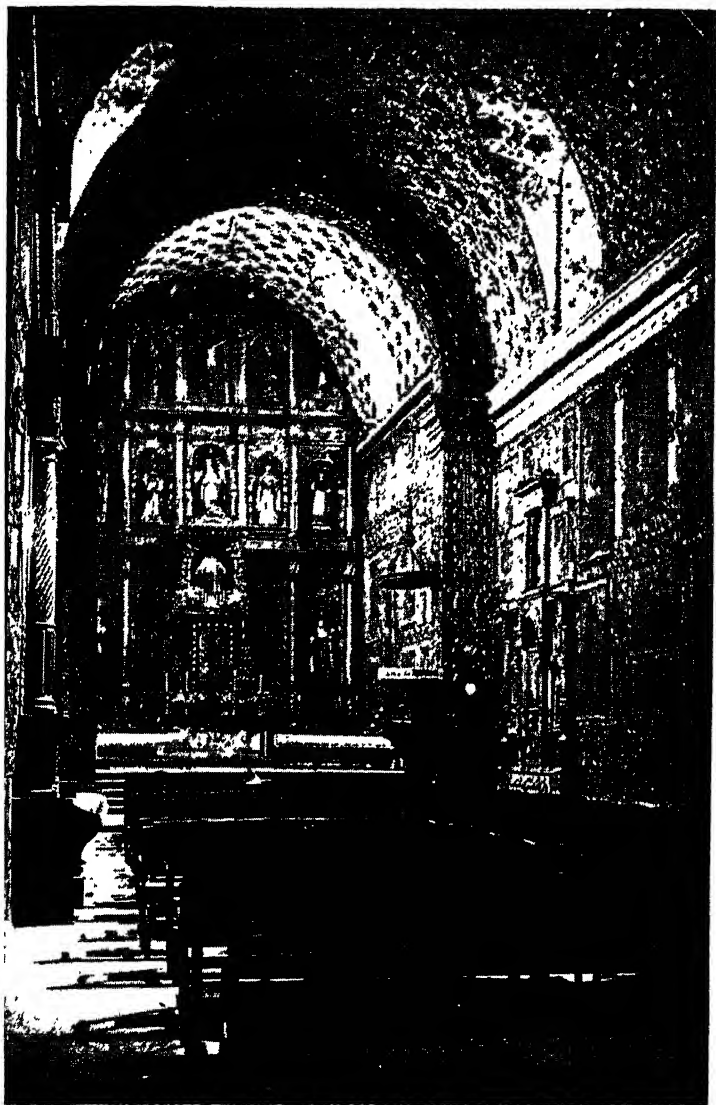
With the presence of even a few women society becomes immediately more subtle, more complex,

more emotional. It is easy, therefore, to imagine those elusive changes which soon came about as brick houses began to replace those of cane and thatch, the Moorish architecture of the south of Spain supplanting the round conical-roofed houses of the Chibchas. I fancy those six women announcing, "Why, of course you can't expect us to live like this!" Such and such things must be done, woman laying with her inexorable little hands the foundations of civilization, building her safeguards and at the same time all unconsciously forging the chains which she was for so many years to hug to herself; while men, in the presence of loaves of wheat bread, acquiesced.

As time went on more women came and more men; but there were still not enough women to go around, and since some men had wives, all desired them.

Many Spaniards therefore took Indian women; often going so far as to marry them, for in those days royalty was a greater factor than race, and expediency, as now, greater than either. The daughters of native chiefs and sovereigns were eagerly wed, and there began that great fusing of Spanish and Indian blood which has created a new people.

Society in Bogotá expanded, and slowly the Chris-



THE CHURCH OF SANTA CLARA, BOGOTÁ



tian religion replaced the Chibcha worship of sun and moon: and the Chibchas no longer needed to buy parrots and macaws from the Magdalena River Indians, nor to teach these birds to talk that they might later sacrifice them, in the hope of deluding their gods into believing that human beings had been offered. The Virgin came to be worshiped instead of the rainbow, and a complex heaven was substituted for Elysian fields where every one was to have the supreme reward of a garden to cultivate.

There arrived monks and priests to administer this new religion; and new churches and monasteries appeared in Bogotá.

Women having demanded civilization, a trail was constructed to Honda, where canoe and raft service was established on the river, making it possible to bring to Bogotá the ornaments and luxuries of the day; pictures and holy images, great Spanish combs, and mantillas, shawls and jewelry, images and pictures. Three times a year now there was mail from Spain, and smallpox also came, along with the arts of Europe.

To this changed and changing Bogotá Quesada returned twelve years after its founding; and from Bogotá he once more set forth for conquest. He would find the golden city, the El Dorado, in which all still believed. His expedition is a story of tragic

failure, and when he struggled back to Bogotá he was an old man, his strength and his fortune spent.

With the passing of the years other convents and monasteries and churches were erected, churches with gorgeous ceilings of red and gold, gilded altars, and images.

Men and women continued to arrive, and many children were born in Bogotá.

There was then one last exploit of Quesada. A warrior tribe under the leadership of its chief, Yuldama, conceived the idea of revolt, plotting to overthrow their conquerors. In this crisis Quesada, now seventy-four years old, found himself again at the head of a worshiping force, which the brave old man headed on horseback; and although he had at times to be carried in a hammock, so great was his exhaustion, he nevertheless fell with all the fire of his youth upon the Indians. Yuldama was killed, and Quesada entered Bogotá triumphant, to die six years later of leprosy, with all Bogotá draped in black to do him honor.

Gradually schools were established, as had been governing tribunals, churches, and convents. The Jesuits came, and with them the first printing-press. The grains and fruits of Europe were cultivated on the fertile temperate plains of the plateau, and Bogotá began now to produce artists and musicians

and writers. Scientific expeditions went out, and volumes began to appear treating of botany, mineralogy, and astronomy, as well as books on theology, books of chronicles and of poetry.

At frequent intervals throughout the years there were earthquakes and epidemics of smallpox. These words appear here and there in the chronicles, as "selah" occurs from time to time in the Psalms of the Old Testament. But Bogotá never lost the courage of its founder. If there were earthquakes, there was at once rebuilding; if there were smallpox, more children would replace those who were lost.

There came then a time when the brave city had grown strong enough to resent the disdain and the domination of Madrid. A writer of the period thus voiced their resentment:

But what were the occasions solemnized by our fiestas? When a new viceroy arrived . . . when a prince was born or an infanta of Spain married. There was also a pompous and lugubrious function upon the death of a member of the royal family. Thus all our hopes and pleasures, all our mourning came from the other side of the ocean. There was nothing national for us, when the very cloth and food marked "from Castile" were considered superior. From there we had also our viceroys, our judges, our ecclesiastics, and our soldiers, as well as our indulgences, our sacred relics, and even the salvation of our souls. Poor colonists! We had nothing, not so much as the sentiment of patriotism!

The war for independence was therefore destined. Spanish South America felt itself to have outgrown the parent country, and resistance followed upon resentment.



Revolutionists organized and attacked; and were by turns victorious and defeated, and again victorious. Patriots were marched this way and that; to be shot in the plaza of Bolívar and in the little park of Santander. Bolívar himself passed in the delirious joy of triumph, with flowers showered from the balconies; and, in the glory of the homage he so loved, he could happily not have foreseen that by a certain window he would one day escape assassins.

All this had come and gone in Bogotá, where in the high cold twilight men now played chess under melancholy evergreens, while street-cars slid harshly over metal rails, and here and there electric lights flashed readiness for the night. The horn of a motor screeched as the machine drew up before the largest private aërial post-office in the world. But the doors with their waiting knockers remained inscrutable; and I was still a stranger in Bogotá.

We had letters of introduction which would open some of those doors, but I hesitated. I wanted as always to arrive at an independent impression, before being shown what to see.

There was the life of street and of market, to absorb which, one must be at once dreamily recep-

tive and searchingly observant, a frame of mind incompatible with society.

Thus for days I filled the intervals of roaming about the streets, with gazing out of the hotel windows.

The windows faced south on Calle 10, and opposite was the church of San Ignacio de Loyola. Shivering in the half-light of cold dawn I would watch people stream out of the church, while bells summoned others to a second mass.

On the feet of that congregation there were few shoes; it was by sheer numbers that the beat of hemp sandals on the pavement annihilated sleep. People poured silently out of the church, with only the sound of many feet; that and an occasional cough, for it had been cold kneeling in the damp dawn on a stone floor. Most of the congregations were Indians; the men in ponchos and the women huddled in inadequate shawls; children duplicating in miniature the costume of their parents. But there were also women of *cholo*, *mestizo*, and Spanish castes; women whose feet were shod in shoes and about whose heads were pinned closely the shrouding black *mantas* which so effectually obliterate caste lines, making all for the moment equal in the sight of God.

Later the candle shop across the way opened

its wide doors as if to admit the street, and thus exhibited rows upon rows of white candles, great and small; with rows also of little wax models of hands and arms and legs, to be left with prayers before altars.

Next to the candle shop was an establishment furnishing Bogotá with hearses and coaches, and sometimes the day began with a hearse and sometimes with a bridal coach. Drooping black plumes were dusted and a silver cross screwed into the top of that final vehicle, or the bride's coach was festooned with tiny white bows, while footmen and coachmen strutted about in tall glossy hats, white trousers, high black boots and long-tailed black coats, with white carnations in their buttonholes.

And these things which I watched from the window, masses and funerals, weddings and candles, were all links with the life that went on behind the doors.

So also was the market to which are sent the servants who know life as it is lived behind the doors of Bogotá, servants sent to shop for their mistresses, since no elegant and refined person may go to market.

The market is instructive, with its combined products of fertile plateau and luxurious tropical valleys; strange and delicious fruits of distant equa-

torial suns, side by side with peaches and cherries and grapes and strawberries; side by side as though there were no such thing as seasons or climates.

There are lines of blazing flower-stalls where tropic flowers fraternize with temperate. Never were there such roses and camellias, such hibiscuses and carnations; and never were pansies and gladioli so vivid and so large; as though the earth had said, "See the beauty which I can bring forth."

There are stalls which display the every-day needs of the simple life of an Andean city; stalls of the decorative straw mats which serve as beds; stalls of hemp sandals, of baskets and bags, of native-woven ponchos and blankets, of wooden utensils and pottery; and stalls piled high with bolts of crudely bright calico.

The market is busy, crowded, and courteous. With many "*perdóns*" and "*permisos*," bare and sandaled feet make their slippery way over the mud floor, in and out among the stalls.

A man with two parrakeets and a wheezy little organ announces that for a penny the birds will tell your fortune. At his command they cease climbing wrong side up about their cage, and both appear eager to select from a box of folded salmon papers the one which will be your fortune. The salmon papers are labeled "The Sacred Heart of Jesus,"

and there is a picture of Christ displaying the heart, while inside the pink slip is printed your fate;

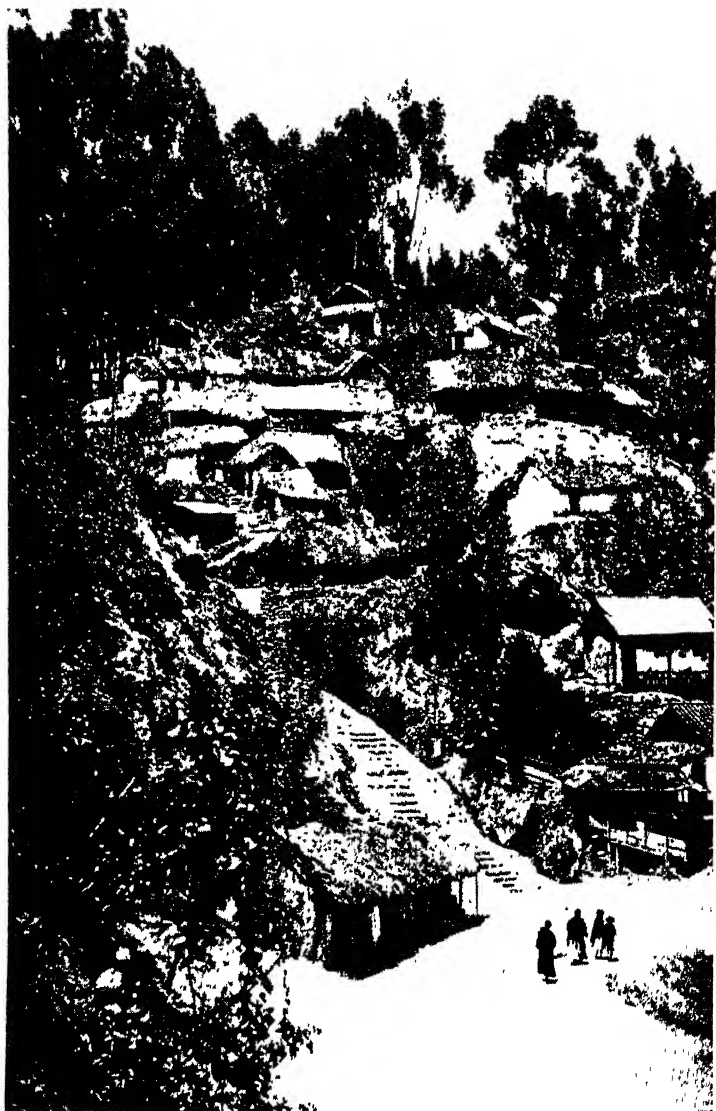
The oracle promises that you will vanquish your enemies . . . that you are soon to receive an unexpected legacy . . . that before you know it you will be possessed of great dominions . . . that you have borne heavy burdens, but that now colossal luck waits at your door . . . and that in the lottery you will be fortunate in the numbers 1234 to 1245.

And there is a strange pair which attracts curious crowds: a native Indian, short and thick-set, as are most of the surviving South American tribes; and a *zambo*, part Indian and part negro, a tall, powerfully built man with the negroid traits predominating. He is proclaiming in a singsong monologue that he speaks for "this indigenous one" who has come up from his home on the Goajira Peninsula, in order to give the citizens of Bogotá an opportunity to purchase those wonderful remedies which it is well known are the secret discoveries of his people. There is in particular a pomade . . . quite miraculous in cases of rheumatism. . . .

Meanwhile the "indigenous one" is smoking a huge cigar and spitting recklessly and profusely, his black-stained face utterly expressionless.

In all this, Bogotá is not greatly different from other South American markets. The Indians of the Colombian plateau are less colorful and distinctive than those of the Ecuadorian Andes; and





THE SUBURB OF EGIPTO

in Colombia one misses the disdainful llamas which in Ecuador condescend to act as beasts of burden. Otherwise these Andean markets are much the same.

But in Bogotá, alone of all the world, does one find poetry sold side by side with poultry. Little boys stroll about offering for a few pennies small paper-bound collections of what they so prettily call *poesías*; and cheaper still are verses printed on single slips, printed often in red.

In the markets of Bogotá there is an excellent sale for *poesías*. Frequently the purchaser cannot read, and the small salesman must read aloud from his collection that his customer may make a choice. And always a crowd gathers to listen.

I follow these children, buying whenever possible duplicates of the poems selected by the barefoot half-breeds of Bogotá's market.

A sweet-faced, gentle-eyed *chola* woman is sitting on a box, her black shawl slipped back from her shiny dark head and wrapped about the tiny baby in her arms. She is looking over an assortment of verses; hesitating . . . and finally selecting "Good-by to my mother," printed in red on a single strip.

A bare-legged girl in short tattered garments considers the poems, while at her feet a rabbit, seated on the ground, is making the neatest of toilets; very scrupulous and leisurely as though he



had all eternity before him, instead of facing the strong probability of being converted into stew before the day was done.

The girl considers. There are poems upon "Poverty" and "Marriage among the Poor"; upon the eyes of a loved one; upon the soldier who promises that on a morrow which is never to be for him he will return to the window of his love; and there are poems celebrating the devotion of parents and children, poems to the dead, and one to a blind musician who sits with his guitar by the wayside.

But it is a poem inscribed "To the Little Laundress" for which the barefoot girl finally exchanges her penny; to a "Lovely Little Laundress, with eyes as fair as the sun, and a soul as blue as the skies; a Little Laundress who sings while she scrubs . . . Listen to me, Little Laundress, and tell me why you are so happy and why you sing as you scrub? . . ."

The pretty chambermaid at the hotel one day volunteered the information that if we wished to buy old pictures and antiques she could direct us to what she called a *comisionista*. We were to proceed up Calle 10 in the direction of Egipto, past the theater on one side and a small shop on the other. The shop would display a sign offering "early breakfasts and

eleven o'clocks. . . . But that is not the one. . . . Farther along there is another, and it is next to that that you will find the house of Andrea who is *comisionista*."

The directions seemed vague, for all Bogotá is sprinkled with signs announcing "early breakfasts and eleven o'clocks." But proceeding up Calle 10, we arrived without difficulty at the house of Andrea.

It was the sort of house whose door cannot afford to be inscrutable, since it must stand open to admit light to the windowless interior. To secure limited privacy, a great old-fashioned wardrobe had been placed across the entrance; the wardrobe opening on the street, for otherwise its contents would have been lost in the semi-darkness of the room.

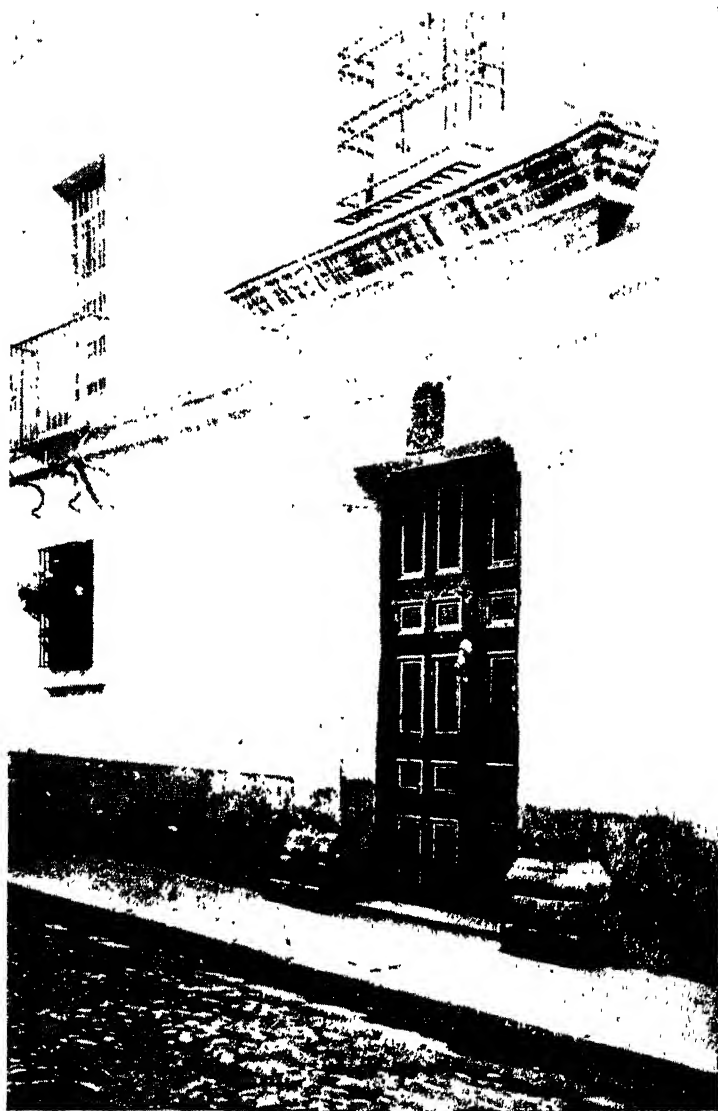
From behind that wardrobe Andrea appeared, an elderly little woman with an Indian complexion, a blind eye, and a patient expression. She fetched dilapidated Spanish chairs and then, producing a key, opened the ponderous wardrobe and took out a small black leather bag, again closing and locking the wardrobe. A purple velvet case inside the bag contained a rosary of carved gold beads; in a little box was an emerald ring and a necklace of tiny pearls, Colombian pearls from the peninsula of Goajira. But her stock was low, Andrea lamented. She kept repeating that there was not much, not

much. . . . But she would take us to the house of a señora where we might see more. . . . It was, however, far . . . if "meester" would call a coach——

Curious urchins, who had paused in their crying of lottery-tickets in order to investigate what we did in the house of Andrea, ran off to the plaza to hail a coach, while behind the wardrobe Andrea donned an enveloping black *manta*. It all happened so quickly that in a moment the cloud of urchins had again taken up the cry of how lucky were the numbers they offered, and we were jouncing and bouncing over cobbles; the driver instructed by Andrea to turn here and proceed there, and finally to halt before one of the inscrutable doors which, however, opened at once at the knock of Andrea.

To the street this house presented the somber aspect of an abode sealed against the world. But with the opening of the door we stepped into a lovely patio, where orange-trees were fragrant with blossom and golden with fruit, where there were great bushes of creamy tea-roses, of white roses and pink roses, while hung from the columns of the corridor were baskets of flaming geraniums. From this flowery gallery opened large bright bedrooms and a stiffly ornate drawing-room.

The street had shown the usual staring white walls, with, high above the sidewalk, one or two



THE HOUSE OF THE MARQUIS OF SAN JORGE



little closed windows and in the center an expressionless door with a knocker-hand. Within was space and life. There was even from the patio a view, out over warm red roofs to the church on the peak of Monserrate.

It was an old house. The señora had lived there all her life; her four daughters had been born there. They spoke with an air of permanence, as though nothing but earthquake ever shook these hidden homes of Bogotá, where funerals followed christenings in the cycle of generations, and where women, shut up with the stark facts of life, turned to the church for romance.

The antiquities assembled for our inspection consisted of an ancient work-box; a little shrine inside which was an image of the *Virgen del Campo*; a few pictures; and a side-saddle, heavy, carved, and embossed, dating from the days when great ladies had on mule-back covered the weary mountains which separate the capital from Honda on the river.

When the door of this house closed behind us, the wall with its blind windows seemed to deny the existence of orange-trees and of women eager to discuss their lives and yours.

And again we lurched over pavements, to be stopped by Andrea before another door, with another waiting knocker.

It was a dark heavy door with on each side mean little shops on the street, above which were balconied windows inclosed in glass and ornamented with diagonals of green, yellow, and red, back of which wooden blinds were tightly closed.

Standing before the door, it was impossible to guess what waited within. But when it finally opened to Andrea's knock, there was revealed no blaze of blossoms. There was only a flight of stairs leading up from the neglected patio to a withered little lady, like a pressed flower preserved from colonial days.

When she came forward into the light her face showed so deathly a pallor under its powder that she might have been a ghost summoned by Andrea; and Andrea herself, with the black *manta* drawn over her head and about her old face, might have been a go-between among spirits rather than a commission agent in twentieth-century Bogotá.

In the lady's pallid face were sunk dark dim eyes, and one of her slender arms was gloved to the elbow in white silk; the hand, she explained, was ill.

After whispered talk with Andrea this white lady tremblingly opened a door, letting us into a room where paintings in gold frames lined walls hung with embroidered silks of soft lovely hues; a room

crowded with treasures of church and of palace. There were high-backed chairs with heavy embossed leather and carved arms, and chairs with backs of gold embroidery and arms inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In a writing-desk of Empire design were pieces of colonial silver; plates and platters of incredible weight and exquisitely severe form. There was a four-poster bed with ornamental head- and foot-pieces, red, gorgeously decorated in gold; with a piece of gold brocade laid across the bed and upon the brocade a book three feet square, bearing in gilt letters the name of Vasques. And there were ever so many elaborately inlaid tables and fragments of ecclesiastical gold cornices.

Everywhere was a splendor beyond the most extravagant dreams of those first six Spanish women who, four hundred years ago, had arrived at the thatched village of twelve huts, their heads full of all sorts of ambitious schemes.

"It was my brother's room," the withered little lady was saying; and, turning to look at her, I realized that she had been beautiful with finely delicate features, beautiful with a fragile languorous beauty. "It was my brother's room," she repeated. "Here is the photograph of my brother. He died in this room . . . in that bed. . . ." Her deep fading eyes dwelt upon the gold glitter of the bed where lay



the volume labeled "Vasques." And I knew that she saw lying there the brother, and not the book.

"It was in the year one thousand nine hundred and seventeen that he died . . . in that bed."

In a swiftly fleeting instant I seemed to see what she saw; a dark, heavily mustached man lying quite, quite still; indifferent to the pictures and chairs and tables which surrounded him; unaware even of the priest coming to perform those last holy rites; the Host entering, with the light of the open door glinting on the silver cross.

The scene flashed clear and detailed, and then vanished as the lady's eyes shifted from the bed to rest puzzled upon two strangers in the room.

We asked about the paintings and the furniture, but we got no further than that they had belonged to her brother who had died in the bed. And then there entered the great-niece; a girl as surprising as the room, so far did she seem removed from it in her short cloth skirt and simple white blouse, with her feet in the stubby-toed brown Oxfords of the most modern college girl.

The characteristic phrase of Bogotá is "*Por supuesto*," as "*Cómo no?*" is indispensable in the conversation of the West Coast; the Bogotánian saying, "Of course" to everything, where the West Coast remarks, "Why not?"

And with this "Of course" the gray-eyed girl with the stubby shoes began.

*Por supuesto*, it was a pleasure to have us see the things. Her great-uncle had been so devoted to them. He lived all his life in the room, living among his treasures. You see he was a bachelor. With each new addition to his collection he used to say that he had a honeymoon.

The chairs? . . . Oh, the chairs had once belonged to a viceroy. The bed also; and the desk . . . that had been Bolívar's; brought all the way from France, up the Magdalena by boat and over the Andes on mules. The carpet had been woven by nuns of the order of Enseñanza. There was the name of the convent woven across the center in great isolated letters, in the midst of conventionalized birds. A few of the paintings were Spanish. There was a big one by Ribera, but most of them were the work of Colombians, and many were by Vasques. We might look at the book on the bed. It was filled with the original sketches which Vasques had made for his pictures, Vasques who was Colombia's most famous artist.

Her great-uncle had collected all these things; he had indeed been very devoted.

She seemed so young, this girl with her crow-black hair and her strange blue-gray eyes, so young

to be shut up there with the departed glory of colonial Bogotá and the old great-aunt with the sick hand, who murmured about a brother who had died. . . .

Huddled in her *manta*, Andrea had been sitting outside the door, contributing no information; and as it seemed impossible that these treasures were for sale, and unfeeling even to suggest it, we found ourselves saying good-by without ever having broached the subject of purchase.

"*Por supuesto,*" smiled the girl, "it had been a pleasure. . . ."

Thus surprisingly, through Andrea, *comisionista*, had the doors opened.

We went one sunny morning to photograph the exterior of the house of the Marquis of San Jorge, and when the picture was taken we lingered, possessed with the desire to see what lay beyond the door. Running about with Andrea had made us bold; we would lift that brass hand and see what happened.

As the iron-studded door was ponderous, so was the more than life-sized hand which held between its thumb and forefinger a brass apple; and even had the door not been so provocative, the apple would of course have tempted.

And so we raised and let fall the hand. In a moment the door swung slowly, an enormously heavy door, with, inside, a great iron bolt which had worn a deep groove in the wall against which it struck when opened. Within was an entrance-hall between the outer and the inner door, which was also strong with a heavy bolt.

The Marquis of San Jorge had defended well his house; yet it had not been powerful enough to save him from imprisonment and death at the hands of Royalists who in their determination to put down the Revolution spared not even the noblest of the patriots.

We passed through the doors into an arched colonnade which surrounds the flagged patio where among camellias and roses an Andean white throat trilled as gaily as though a brave marquis had not gone out of the house to give his life for the freedom of Colombia. But then it was all very long ago, and to a little whitethroat there is only the sunshine of to-day.

We were interested in the marquis? . . . Then the present mistress of the house would be delighted to show us about. Up the wide staircase she conducted us over floors sagging with age; into long lofty drawing-rooms where parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents looked out from mellow

portraits; mellow as though something had softened once haughty spirits, as though when alone they might even smile a little tenderly at the tragic intensity of the living.

We were shown the secret passage behind the gold and white partition on the landing, and the chapel at the end of the gallery where before a marble altar, under a gilded ceiling, the feudal lord of the mansion had once summoned his household to worship; before he had gone out to die.

And while the quaint little lady of the black gown and the smooth gray hair escorted us from room to room, she confided her own uneventful history:

Her parents were dead, and she and her sister lived there alone. Wasn't it absurd? . . . two little old ladies in such a big house! . . . But on Sundays they dined brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, with their husbands and wives and children. The great dining-room was none too large on Sundays.

There were views over the city which she would have us see, and there was the conservatory and the servants' quarters, an establishment in itself, with a patio cultivated as a vegetable garden. And we must meet her sister who in a small sitting-room sat entertaining an aged padre who made a morning call.

Then Quaint Little Lady No. 1 had to impart to





ROBES OF HUMILITY

her quaint little duplicate the answers to all the questions she had been asking me: when had we arrived and how long were we remaining; whether we liked Bogotá; at what hotel were we stopping; did they take good care of us, and did we like the food? And was our own country pretty, like Bogotá?

When all this had been repeated, the second of the dainty fluttering ladies had her own questions.

Where did our windows look? . . . Oh, then we were opposite the church of San Ignacio. What was my favorite church in Bogotá, and why? Did we like the cemetery?

Yes, we had seen the tomb of Quesada with the inscription which he had himself composed: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead."

And then the old padre must ask whether we knew his church, which was the little church of San Diego, celebrated for its poverty, its humility, and its penances. We must visit him, and he would show us the wonderful Virgin, cut from stone by angels. She was a marvelously miraculous Virgin. . . .

And the little sisters chirped that she was "prodigious." The padre had twelve lovely dresses for her . . . of embroidered silk.

The padre's own robe admitted an age of thirty years, and the varying black of its rusty patches



testified to the fact, as well as to how truly he observed the poverty of San Diego.

Talking to this saintly padre and to the two little twittering bombazine ladies, one might almost forget that sense of imminent change which permeates Colombia, and which has not yet crossed the threshold of the house of the Marquis of San Jorge.

Of all the enigmatic doors of Bogotá none are so baffling as those which shut in the cloistered nuns. In a certain *calle* there is a low white building which turns a blind face to the street. Above the door, across the blank whitewashed wall, in vague black letters, spaced far apart, are the words

### LA CONCEPCION

A door giving upon the street opens into a vestibule, where, beside the main door, there is let into the wall a small revolving wicket of solid wooden panels.

I see a priest enter and for a moment converse with some one behind the wicket.

When he goes away I take his place. "Is it possible," I ask, "for a señora from North America to visit the convent?"

From behind the tantalizing wicket a voice of bird-

like sweetness inquires whether the lady is thinking of becoming a nun. And I am forced to confess that I wish only to visit the convent.

"But, señora, we are very cloistered. It is not permitted to visit us." The voice is amused. It asks the name of this droll person who thinks she can visit cloistered nuns. And then because of the very enormity of the idea the voice decides that it will go and ask "Reverend Mother." It goes away, for when I speak there is no answer.

While I stand thus waiting before the dumbly unresponsive wicket, ragamuffins who have gathered in the doorway swarm about me begging for "little cents."

Then the voice comes back. "Reverend Mother is sorry, but it is not in her power to give the permission. . . . And I am to tell you that there is really nothing to see. Our beautiful convent was long ago taken from us. This is only a private house generously given over to our use."

"But it is not the convent, but you, that I want to see!"

I persist, for I have fallen in love with the radiance of the voice.

"Ah, señora. I may not see you here, but . . ." triumphantly, "but I shall meet you in the sky!"

"Tell me what you do all day?" I question. I do

not need to ask if she is happy; the voice which is like a song has told me that.

“We pray and we embroider. We embroider vestments and altar-cloths while Reverend Mother reads to us from sacred books.”

“And how long have you been here . . . in this convent?”

“More than twenty years. I entered when I was eighteen. . . .”

Nearly forty years old . . . twenty years shut away from the poignant beauty of the world . . . yet with the voice of a joyful child!

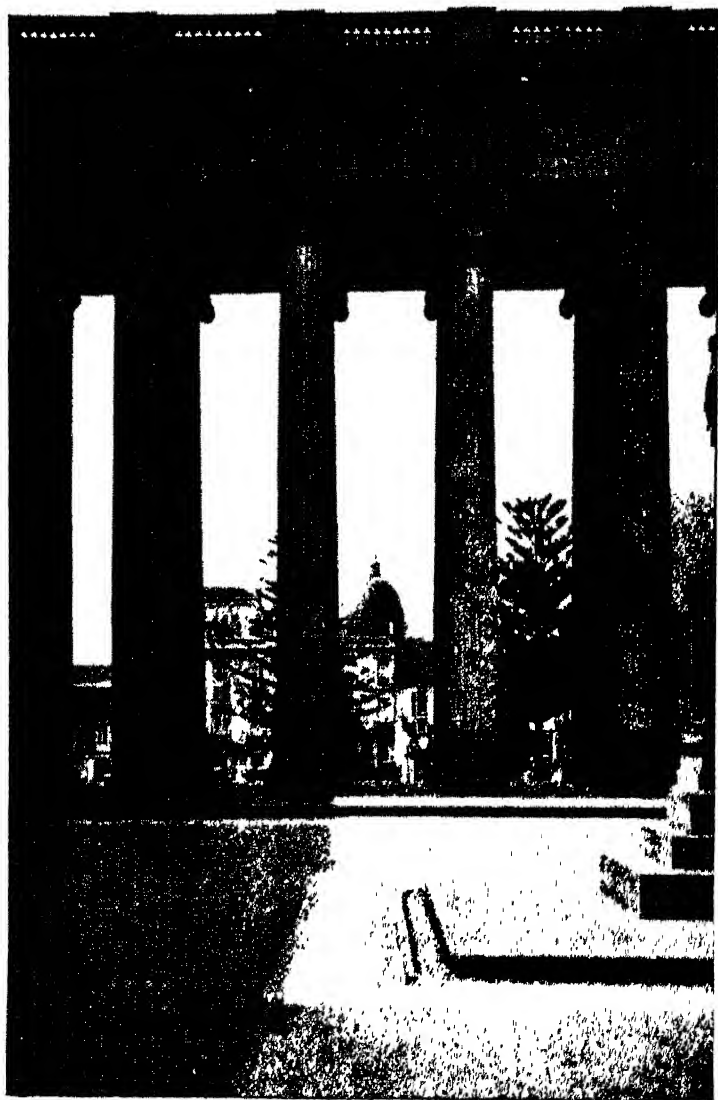
The ragamuffins renew their chorus of “*centavito*,” and the voice becomes a laugh, running up and down a sweet merry scale.

“Somehow I can’t bear to leave you.” I find myself turning the wicket, as though vainly hoping that it might by some accident reveal the face of the voice. I am reluctant to go away into freedom, leaving her behind revolving wooden panels which, no matter how you turn them, forever shut her into the life of the cloister.

“But I am happy, my friend, and I shall meet you . . . in the sky.”

And she adds that her name is Mercedes, as though I might need it when it came to asking for her there.





THROUGH THE COLONNADE OF THE CAPITOL

When I move away, the center of a begging bevy, I feel that I am no longer a stranger in Bogotá.

It was then possible to present credentials without fear of imperiling the spontaneous and unprejudiced impressions of discovery; to let luncheons and teas interrupt happy idling in the markets and intrude upon dreaming in the Park of Santander, where students walk up and down under the evergreens, studying aloud, their presence attracting flocks of bootblacks, the diversion of whose conversation tempts to unnecessary "shines"; and where on Mondays the lottery numbers, after being whirled in a wire cage, are dropped one by one into a basket and held up that all may note for themselves the winning figures.

We began now to see aristocratic Bogotá at home, and no society could be more gracious or more cultivated. We drank champagne from silver goblets. We made friends with children as elaborate as costly French dolls. The roses of Bogotá blossomed in their cheeks, for children and flowers bloom vividly in the climate of the plateau.

We had tea in a beautiful stately home where calla-lilies stood about in tall crystal vases; where there was a private ball-room and where in the long drawing-room there was actually a tiny coal

fire burning in one of the four fireplaces of chilly Bogotá.

It was from one of our charming hostesses that I learned the story of the President whose resignation had been forced by the quiet power of public opinion. The President had accepted a loan of twenty-five thousand dollars from an official of one of the foreign companies conducting business in Colombia. The loan had been negotiated, she said, in a perfectly frank and businesslike manner. The President had not been suspected of corruption; but public opinion, seeing the danger of such loans, was none the less forceful, for the absence of violence. The President had at once resigned, with dignity and without scandal.

The señora who told me the story was justly proud of such a refutation of the popular myth of South American government by revolution.

We looked not only upon this delightful Colombian hospitality, but we had also a glimpse of the foreign colony of that far-off capital. The American legation included us in the warmth of its fatherly hospitality, and there, around another of the four fireplaces, we listened to golfing and country-club talk; to discussion of the eighteen-hole course near the suburb of Chapinero as compared with other courses . . . in Quito, La Paz, Buenos Ayres.

In such a foreign colony there were many who escaped from Mexico in the days when "it was the open season for killing gringos." And there was mining talk and railroad talk and oil talk; talk of drilling and seepage and veins; of territory where a population of one million eight hundred thousand thickly settled agricultural people have with the outside world no connection by rail or steamer; still as dependent upon caravans of mules as in the days before steam or motor.

Wherever the gringo is, there is this insistence upon change, upon development and progress; illustrated by tales of men who had made millions in an hour, tales as fantastic as those of El Dorado which four centuries ago lured the Spaniards.

At the Anglo-American Club we danced one afternoon to an orchestra which strove to be jazzy. And, in the aloofness of the foreigner, inscrutable doors with waiting hands and a market where little boys sold poetry to laundresses seemed equally unreal.

When the door of this club closed upon syncopation we found ourselves once more in the Plaza Bolívar. It had been raining, and electric lights, dear to the vassals of progress, were reflected in a luminous blur on the pavement.

Across the plaza proceeded a silver cross held



high, an acolyte ringing a bell, and a priest in white lace tunic, followed by a group of men in black.

The Host passed on its way to the dying, and with its passing all fell upon their knees; coachmen in waiting vehicles, passengers in the street-car brought to a sudden halt, pedestrians, men and women, even the little lottery-venders, all fell upon their knees on the dark wet pavement.





THE ROAD TO TEQUENDAMA

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE HIGH PLATEAU

WE awaited the oxen which were to take us to the falls of Tequendama, sitting, while we waited, outside the station of El Charquito at the end of a spur which the southern railway of the plateau sends out to serve the coal-mines of that region.

We had our lunch in a basket; the day was still a mere infant; and we were to visit Tequendama. So there was joy in our hearts.

A railroad engineer, who had scraped acquaintance with us on the way down, sat and talked, the conversation obviously turning upon the carts of coal which, at the unwilling behest of oxen, climbed the hill, to be emptied into waiting freight-cars.

The men who did the shoveling earned sixty cents a day. Off the line you could get laborers for from ten to thirty cents. In fact the further you penetrated the interior the lower were wages and the cheaper was life.

The coal was mined almost anywhere in the hills about us; all you had to do was to scratch the sur-

face, and there was coal. But of what use was it when the cost of transportation to the coast was so great? That was why the mining was carried on in primitive and desultory fashion, simply to supply enough for local needs.

This subject of isolation led to the ever-present topic of the development of Colombia.

Traveling about the United States at a time when the great transcontinental railroads were planned and built must have been much like traveling through Colombia at this stage of its evolution. There would have been in the air the same stir of unrest, the same discussion of visions in which few believed until they took actual physical form before their eyes.

Talk of development naturally suggested the expenditure of the twenty-five million dollars which the United States was then paying Colombia in settlement of the Canal Zone claims.

"When Congress voted that money," the engineer said, "Colombia was all of a sudden overrun with every sort of promoter, and every sort of crook, too. They came down like geese from the frozen north, and each one of 'em had his own pet idea about how Colombia ought to spend the money."

In that matter of the canal, the Colombians seem to have buried the hatchet in conclusive fashion,

for we heard nowhere any post-mortems, all discussion being confined to constructive argument concerning the expenditure of the compensation.

And believing that hatchets should not be exhumed, I can see no point in reopening a dispute now happily settled, a dispute which can only resolve itself into the question of whether the end ever justifies the means.

Thus while we waited at El Charquito we were concerned with the future rather than with the past. But when we finally jolted off in a two-wheeled cart we became part of a universe of oxen, quite as though there were no such thing as future or development.

Oxen were coming and going over the winding road; often two pairs yoked to a single cart; red oxen and white oxen twisting up branching roads to the entrances of many little coal-mines, and back again with loaded carts to the road.

We bumped along in the high, sweet mountain air, marveling at the skill with which our driver guided us between the coming and going of the coal-carts, to this side or that of the protruding loads of mules, up and down hill and around sharp curves; steering us with the nicety of a chauffeur, although this our driver was only a small boy who, like the other drivers, marched nonchalantly ahead; guiding us

with a long pole like a fishing-rod, one end of which he carried on his left shoulder, while the other, provided with a steel spur, rested in one of two notches spaced three inches apart in the center of the yoke.

It was merely by the shifting of the pole from one of these notches to the other that the animals were directed and the cart dexterously manœuvered in and out of the confused traffic; a method entirely different from that of the coast, where rope reins serve to guide the ox-carts of the banana plantations.

When it was necessary to make our steeds back, the small driver would dance in front of them, uttering alarming imprecations, beating upon the ground with his pole until its spur jingled, or again using the pole with all the mystic gesticulation of a drum-major with a baton.

Such was our progress to Tequendama; along the highway which follows the course of the river Bogotá as it hurries to its great adventure, flowing companionably beside the road, and then all at once disappearing . . . ceasing to be. The road has suddenly narrowed to a trail which twists about the face of wooded hills, but the river . . . the river has amazingly vanished!

The small driver halts his oxen. "Here," he says, "is the Salto de Tequendama."

The wooden rattling of our cart ceases; the driver's pole is placed with one end on the ground and the other in a notch of the yoke. A step forward or back on the part of the oxen would dislodge the pole; but it never occurs to them to take it. When the symbol of authority is thus left resting against the yoke, they will stand patiently for an unlimited number of hours. Neglect to leave this trumpery emblem, and away your oxen will go in your absence.

Having thus secured his beasts, our driver leads the way to the spot a few hundred feet below, where the river so surprisingly disappears. And, as we hurry down, I find myself translating his *Salto de Tequendama*, realizing then that the Colombians do not speak of Falls, but of a Leap, a Jump; as though they would imply daring intention on the part of their rivers.

Eagerly we hasten after our master of oxen, who since that one remark has been silent; but the cool rushing roar which seems bewilderingly to come from every direction says all that needs to be said, for the roar is the voice of Tequendama.

And when we suddenly halt, it is because we find ourselves on the brink of that wild Jump, that mad leap which the river Bogotá has made and which is known geographically as the "famous Falls of Tequendama."



We stand awed upon the brink, looking down into a great oval gorge which narrows sharply at its bottom, five hundred feet below us. On the right, the gray-blue cliff of the gorge is hung with vines and studded with tiny yellow blossoms which grow close to the gray rock. On the left, the cliff of the gorge is rose and buff.

Into this lovely chasm the river has hurled itself, to flow far below us, down the length of the gorge, and out between the high narrow opening at the opposite end, through which show the distant hills of the hot country, where the river Bogotá will join the Magdalena.

We follow the trail around the brink of the cañon to a point where we may look across to the falls, upon which we have been giddily gazing down.

In the unimpeded view we see the dark green of forested hills rising above the silver of a flowing river, which leaps into a spacious flowering chasm. We see that the water strikes first a narrow rock shelf, about six feet below the top; and that with the force of the collision it is shattered into rockets of spray; the rockets then striking a second shelf, ten feet below the first, from which the drop is sheer and unbroken to the far bottom, to which the water now dashes in point-lace spray.

And while we gaze enthralled, drifting wisps of

blue mist slowly fill the gorge, obliterating almost imperceptibly the river . . . the Falls . . . the vivid cliffs . . . and, at last, even the surrounding hills; a wet mist creeping in, cold mountain mist, like the mist which drifts over the Himalayas, on the trail to Phalut.

As the river disappeared, so now all has vanished, but out of the great blue haze there comes the vast astonished gasp of the Jump of Tequendama.

Upon another day we traveled north over that plateau of Bogotá, which the Colombians call the Sabana, and which is three hundred miles long, fifty wide, and nearly nine thousand feet above the sea; a great fertile green plateau, where in spite of the somewhat mythical division of the year into autumn and spring rains, winter and summer drouths, there seems in reality to be more or less rain throughout the twelve months; quite unlike the north coast whose seasons are more sharply defined.

Because of its intermittent rain, this plateau is green; and because it is fertile and temperate it is populous and prosperous.

We traveled to the end of the Ferrocarril del Norte, thirty-eight miles north over the plateau, passing through an agricultural country of waving

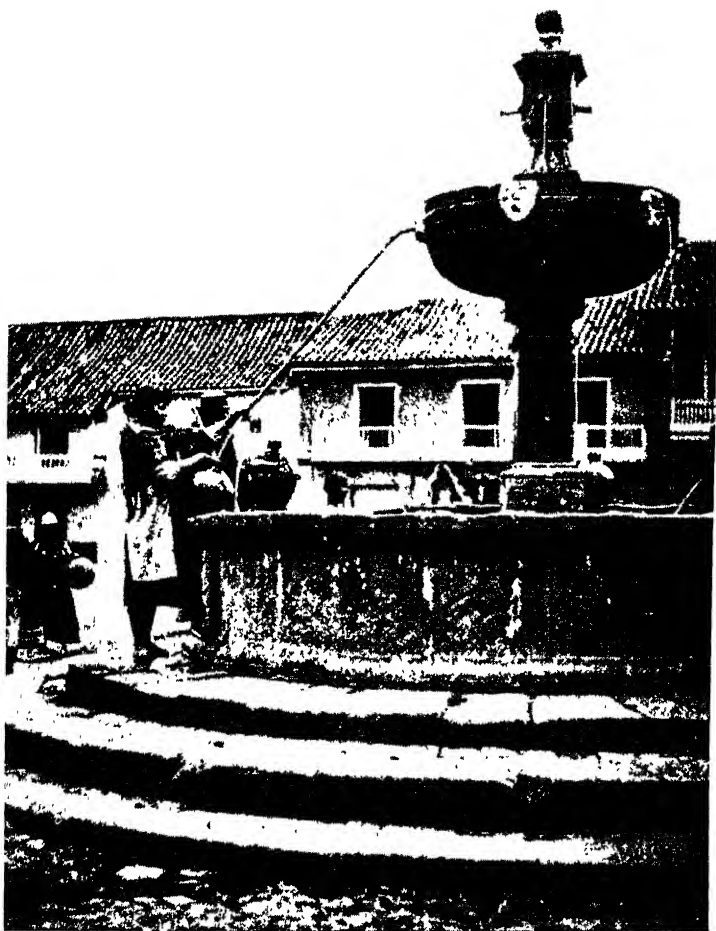
fields of wheat and barley and corn, green fields inclosed by gray adobe walls.

Gray adobe walls also surround adobe houses, gray under their heavy-peaked crowns of thatch, through which seeps the smoke of household fires. Turf tops the walls, and wild flowers powder the turf with gold. At intervals in the walls are ornamental gateways roofed with dull red tile; sometimes these tiles replace the turf on the walls, and tile-roofed also are the frequent villages. Sheep and cattle and horses roam the pastures; willows weep over the streams; and here again is the river Bogotá, flowing placidly between a double avenue of eucalyptus-trees drawn like a dark strong line across the landscape, the river flowing placidly south to take its great leap at Tequendama.

We followed this road to its end at Nemocón, where the mountains again close in: but at Zipaquirá we stopped off to visit the ancient salt-mines.

Zipaquirá is almost entirely an Indian village. Indians kneel devoutly in the great white church with its double towers, and Indian women with dark shawls over their heads come with water-jars to the fountain in the plaza.

As the spouts of the fountain are placed high, the women fill their jars by means of long hollow



THE PLAZA OF AN ANDEAN VILLAGE



bamboo sticks, to one end of which sections of cattle-horns have been attached; when the horn end is slipped over the spout, the water is conducted through the bamboo pipe down to the mouth of the jar.

But although women were thus gathered about the fountain, we found Zipaquirá quiet, quiet as an Andean village is quiet when it is not market day. It was not only still, but it lacked the color of a similar Ecuadorian village; for the Indians of Colombia are somber in their dark garments and their dingy Panama hats. Unlike the aborigines of Ecuador, they have brought over to the present none of the color of their far past; the stolidity of their patient resignation is not enlivened by the gay ponchos or vivid skirts which stand out like bizarre and gorgeous flowers against the fields of the Ecuadorian Andes.

In Colombia, the Indian does not stand forth; rather he is absorbed into the background of the soil of which he is a part, and which he loves with the blind dogged love of his race, for even this dumbly patient creature has his enthusiasms. He loves marriage and the land; he loves the images and the glittering tinsel of churches; he loves market days and feast days; and dearly he loves the *chicha* which warms his stomach and his spirit. But

he has forgotten the subtly intoxicant power of color, more subtle and more enduring than the *chicha*, which inevitably ends in a sodden dulling of the very spirit which he strives to gladden.

Thus was Zipaquirá somber on that quiet day which was not market day, when we walked through its streets; somber as the smoke which oozed from the gray roofs of thatch.

We had presented our letter to the Administrador who had summoned the superintendent to escort us. But I had had first to be presented to the Administrador's lady, who had, with many embraces, offered me brandy and black coffee; who had told me of the epidemic of typhoid then raging and just who had died; and I had agreed fervently to the pity of it, while the kind señora insisted that I apply very pink face powder imported from France. Only after the interchange of a thousand sweet expressions of regard were we permitted to proceed to the mine which she described as "beautiful and terrible."

And "beautiful and terrible" I found it when, after following a long low tunnel, just wide enough for the eighteen-inch track over which the barrows of ore are trundled, we came suddenly into a huge vault, leaving the brilliant electric bulbs of the tunnel to pass into a great and lofty chamber, lit only

by the occasional lights which illuminated spots where miners were at work.

In the immensity of the vault any noise of the workmen was insignificant. Boys carrying baskets of rock salt came and went. They must have talked; there must have been some noise of hacking out the salt, and of emptying baskets; but I recall only the sudden resonant thunder of blasting; blasting sounding on all sides, above as well as around us; that thunder and the grinding crunch of a slide somewhere in the blackness of the high-arched silence where vault led to vault; the thunder and the crunch echoing as must have echoed the subterranean forces of the world's beginning.

Passing from the mystery of one vault to another, we came upon a blazing little altar cut in the rock.

Standing before this altar, I saw something moving swiftly among the shadows, a legless body propelled across the floor on its hands, and moving with astonishing speed.

"He was born like that." The superintendent answered my unspoken question. "He's one of our best workmen; we use him to put powder in the fuses."

And then he broke off to say, as though speaking



to some one behind me, "Assemble, *caballeros*." Turning to see to whom so great a word was addressed—for *caballero*, being translated, signified knight, nobleman, gentleman, cavalier—I found that the force of the mine had silently lined up and were standing there, a shadowy company of more or less ragged men and boys.

"*Caballeros*," the superintendent urged, "I want you to march in good order now to the school; quietly and in good order like gentlemen."

Then, with no word of command, they shuffled off two by two into the obscurity, those who wore hats removing them as they passed.

"The school?" I questioned.

"We give the men an hour of school every morning. It's a new thing, recently instituted by the Government."

"May I go to the school?"

"Certainly, señora, if you can climb the hundred and twenty-one steps to the upper mine?"

Of course I could climb them; and so we followed that shuffling line of *caballeros*, penetrating deeper into the darkness, stumbling in the uncertain light of far-spaced bulbs, until we came to those hundred and twenty-one steps.

The climbing was a breathless matter in the close



IN THE OLD SALT MINE AT ZIPAQUIRÁ



sulphurous air of a mine nine thousand feet above the sea. Even the two urchins who had adopted us at the station, appointing themselves camera- and tripod-bearers, even they were breathless as they flitted up and down the staircase, their ponchos flapping until in the weird gloom they were more like gigantic bats than like human urchins.

In the upper mine we followed the reverberating voice of the school, circling a briny lake, past a number of tiny shrines where lights did reverence to religious pictures, through black vault after black vault, until we came to the twilight vault where men sat on stools about a wooden counter and were educated.

Creeping into a vacant chair in a shadowy corner, I attended school, which on that day had taken the form of a lecture on the prevention of typhoid and tuberculosis. The men who had been thus assembled for education listened with a concentration, pathetic when I reflected upon the difficulty of applying sanitation in a cold misty village, without sewage and dependent for water-supply upon the fountain in the plaza. But the result of that pathetic listening may be that some day Zipaquirá will demand pipes and plumbing.

“This,” said the superintendent at the end of

the lecture, "this was our advanced class." In another vault the men of the primary class had been mastering the alphabet.

With such a memory we came out from the "beauty and the terror" of the mine, into the fresh chilly air where little Andean whitethroats proclaimed a frenzy of "sweet cheer here," and where even the gray day seemed by comparison luminous.

There arrived finally the morning when for the last time we rose in the cold dawn of Bogotá, to journey over the Sabana Railway, west to Facativá, and thence down from the plateau to Girardot on the bank of the Magdalena.

And old Andrea, the commission agent, through whom we had first penetrated the inscrutable doors, old Andrea had brought a lovely sheaf of carefully arranged white camellias.

My heart reproached me that we had not fancied or afforded anything that she had had for sale. I would have made her a gift exceeding any reasonable commission, but Andrea was emphatic through her tears; for Andrea at the station on that last morning actually wept, tears flowing in the network of her wrinkles.

While "meester" dashed off to round up our luggage, she sat beside me in the train, with her

black shawl pinned tightly about the withered face, down which tears trickled.

She wanted no gift. She put away from her the envelope containing the money, declaring that she wouldn't touch a gift. She wept increasingly whenever it was mentioned. We were going away, and she knew perfectly well that we would never come back; it was too far . . . she knew it was far . . . and that we would never return to Bogotá. If we would only give her a picture; that was what she wanted.

But we naturally didn't carry pictures about like visiting-cards. Of course there was one of the passport photographs; we would give her that and trust that no official would later demand it.

If I do not paint the Latin-American as he is often painted, it is because I cannot, having never so seen him; it is because of the Andreas, the Señor Vieras, Carrizosas, Espriellas, and the Martinez; because of the nuns and the monks, the coachmen and bootblacks and room-boys; the Dr. Francos; all the strangers who so soon ceased to be strangers and became friends.

I do not deny faults, occasional and much exaggerated discomforts, but I cannot concede that South American faults are greater because they happen to differ from our own. I have tried earnestly to see without prejudice and without partiality, and as I

have seen, I have written, transcribing word for word conversations with the varied people whom we met; letting Colombia thus speak for itself and in its own accents.

And so I show Andrea, whose home is a smoky cabin; Andrea bearing a sheaf of camellias, beautifully arranged; Andrea coming down in the shivering dawn to the train, to weep over the departure of strangers, to whom she owed nothing, and from whom she would accept nothing, nothing but a worthless picture taken for passport purposes.

We stood on the platform to wave to that little weeping black figure; and when we returned to our seats Bogotá was a rapidly diminishing cluster of tile and church towers, for the train was speeding us from the eastern edge of the plateau, west to Facatativá.

And at Facatativá, while freight and luggage were being transferred from the Sabana line to the Ferrocarril de Girardot, small, very ragged boys went about selling the cups of black coffee which in Colombia are more universally peddled than newspapers, and almost as continually as lottery-tickets.

By the Girardot Railway we then descended from the cool mountain world, down over the Andes and into the tropics.

As we proceeded it was suddenly apparent that

there were fewer Indians in shawls and ponchos. We removed first our coats and then our sweaters, for chilly air had been replaced by a caressing sunny warmth, not yet become hot.

Pretty girls, still fair like the girls of Bogotá, came to see the train pull into the blossoming stations. In the zone of dark, glossy-leaved coffee plantations, we halted thirty minutes to lunch, surrounded by gardenias, roses and hibiscuses, by fragrant heliotropes, and orange-trees golden with fruit.

After lunch there were palms and bamboo in the valleys, and the people who flocked to the stations showed the darker skins and the lighter garments of the tropics.

The luxurious beauty of palm and bamboo was in turn replaced by arid cactus country, parched and dusty. And when in the late afternoon we arrived at Girardot, we were again in the world of mosquito-netted beds and of white tropical clothing. At dinner the thermometer in the patio stood at ninety degrees; the tall upstanding palm did not even faintly quiver against the wan sky, and the heat which filled the stifling rooms was motionless. We had indeed come down from the high plateau.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DIFFICULT RIVER

WATCHING the life of the port, we sat on deck in the cane rockers with which all Magdalena River boats are provided: and next to us, also watching, rocked two Franciscan monks in thick, heavy, brown-hooded robes, with long black rosaries suspended from rope girdles.

At the foot of a high stony bank the brown river flowed, incredibly swift, foaming through our stern paddle-wheel, which was chained to the boat to prevent its revolving.

Over a neighboring freight-boat a pale hot sun was rising, following fast upon the hurried dawn.

At the top of the bank a dusty road paralleled the river. Like the Grand Trunk Road of India, it stretched away under dusty trees; and those who followed the road were barefoot. There was also something of the Grand Trunk in the white heat of the road; but there the resemblance ended, for instead of turbaned Orientals and saffron-gowned Buddhist priests with begging-bowls, there were women in loose red smocks, Turkey red, hanging

almost to their ankles, with white Panama hats crowning their long black hair; hats so much too small that they gave the effect of having perched for a moment on their way somewhere else. These were Indian women, and if there were a burden to carry, or charcoal or fodder, vegetables or fruit, it was borne on their backs.

Occasional negro women also traveled the road, bare of head as well as of foot; and, whatever their load, it was balanced skilfully on the top of their heads, while with calico skirts trailing they puffed at stout cigars.

A caravan of mules passed, for much of the river freight still climbs the Andes on mule-back. An Indian in a dark poncho preceded the caravan, which was rounded up in the rear by a child, running with flying diminutive poncho.

The caravan moved out of the scene. A pig was dragged along, and there was much dust. A white donkey, cocking his ears, crossed the stage, followed by a dejected brown one with head bowed; and like all donkeys they subtly achieved the impression of being accompanied rather than driven by their masters or mistresses, with sometimes even an intimation that it might after all be the donkey who was in command.

In the early morning the strip of highway was

thus busy with pedestrians, who entered the picture and were seen for a brief space before the road conducted them from the view of the river.

On a siding along the bank were drawn up freight-cars whose contents men transferred to the three waiting river-boats. A locomotive, smoking tremendously, ran back and forth over the double switchback, depositing full cars, picking up empties, and tooting triumphantly.

To the bank were moored the three river-boats, two-seasleds, two hydroplanes, and a score of dug-out canoes.

Such is Girardot, the only port of entrance to the capital and to the populous plateau, as well as the point from which those bound for the Cauca Valley and the west coast proceed partly by train, but chiefly by mule, up over the Quindio Pass and down the Andes to the Pacific.

And it is the Magdalena which flows so swiftly at the foot of the bank; the river about which centers the past and the present of Colombia, the one great artery of traffic in a land whose mountain ranges stand forbidding guard over imprisoned riches, over mines of gold and silver and platinum and emeralds, over coal and oil.

The Magdalena's fame rests not upon its length or its width or its depth, as does that of the Amazon

or the Yang-tse, but upon the fact that it has been from the beginning the way into Colombia, and upon the spectacular difficulty of its navigation.

The boats which ply up and down this capricious river are flat and broad; for even when loaded to capacity they may not safely draw more than three and a half feet, while in the dry season they carry only half their normal load. Therefore in the lower river, whose width permits it, they add to themselves flat freight-barges, so that they proceed like maternal ducks surrounded by a brood of ducklings.

But on the upper river we made our slow and cautious turning without the complication of a flock of barges, advancing unhampered down the rapid current which, rising in the Andes, hurries north to the sea, flowing between the central and the eastern ranges, throughout three quarters of the length of the country.

Precipitous hills shut us in on this upper river; bare, colored hills with at far intervals fields of ripe yellow corn lying in their valleys; hills limiting our vision to the vision of the river. Sometimes bamboo grew by the water's edge, and there were on the banks glistening black rocks, like seals just emerged dripping from the water.

The river swept us through gorges, into whirl-

pools, and over swirling rapids. It showed us vultures assembled on a beach as dignified as a convention of parsons, cows in the cool shadow of trees, and clustered canoes promising a village invisible from the water. The imprisoning foot-hills shut out all else.

Flying fast and low one of the planes which we had left in Girardot rushed over our heads, the A-10 on its way to Barranquilla. With its passing we seemed to move like snails along the sheen of the river, twisting sharply and with shrill warning whistles around the base of that jagged range over which we, too, had once flown.

Those strange fluted mountains came down to the top of the sheer banks which shut us in; and upon them the sunlight lay in red and yellow patches, while a crooked white trail climbed hotly under the equatorial sun.

We proceeded between shelves of rock upon which many a river-boat had registered itself a total loss; past a tributary stream as dry as though water had never flowed over its stony bed; past little strips of beach where women, like scarlet flowers, drooped over the pounding of clothes, or walked for refreshment into the river without troubling to remove their gay garments.

From rocking-chairs we surveyed the panorama

of these banks, and I made the discovery that monks on the way from one cloister to another are the most responsive of all chance traveling companions. In their eager pleasure at the adventure of every turn of the winding river we had become friends almost at once: they had presented us with the usual religious medals, told us whence they came and whither they went, and made us known to a famous battle-scarred general in a white uniform; wounded, they whispered, in the battle of Las Dolores, in the struggle between the Conservatives and the Liberals in the year "one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine"; a battle which, they said, lasted "seven days with their nights."

There was on board also a poet from Spain, reading his verses in various cities of the Republic; two dainty beauties of Bogotá, on their first visit to the coast; and a small boy on his first journey anywhere.

Together we shared the events of the way; together cried the untranslatable "*Caramba!*" of dismay when, with a grinding crunch, we ran aground, and together agreed that one cannot after all be said properly to know the Magdalena unless one has run aground.

Meanwhile men went below to investigate and to patch fresh wounds in a bottom already covered with dents and patches.

Thus our boat felt its way down to Ambalema, its first official stop, where banana-leaves flopped against little white houses, where women seemed a reflection on the sandy beach of the blossoming flame-trees under which they stood, and where men came on board selling cigars, Ambalema being the port of the Magdalena's tobacco zone.

Six hours after leaving Giradot we tied up at Beltrán, the end of the upper-river stage of our journey. Although Beltrán was hot and dry, like all the upper-river country, the green gate of the steamboat office squeaked in the small breeze, in which we sat realizing the tedious and costly coast-to-interior communication; while men carried freight and luggage from our boat into the railroad station, from which it would all have again to be transferred to the train which was to take us sixty-five miles around the rapids to the port of La Dorada on the lower river.

The way around the rapids lay through a parched and dusty land, where burning wind blew in tall dry grasses; where the light was bright and hot on the fields, and where big pale-barked trees shaded the road beside the line. At intervals a horseman cantered along this road, and the great wooden

gates which evidently separate plantation from plantation slammed dryly behind him.

There is a certain station famed for its pine-apples, and there the train obligingly halted while, relying upon inoculations, we ignored germs and recklessly consumed the world's most delicious pine-apples, three slices for five cents, passed in through the windows. There thirsty passengers—monk and general, poet and beauty—all hung out of car windows devouring the juicy dripping slices, until the supply was finished and more were prepared by resting the fruit on the railroad track while the skin was hacked off with a machete, big enough to serve as a weapon rather than as a knife to prepare pineapple for waiting passengers.

Beyond this station the train hurried into a fantastic volcanic valley, where weird rocks inclose a grassy plain from which rise castles and fortresses and pyramids of grim gray rock, long ago thrown up by the convulsions of a restless planet.

And beyond the valley there was Mariquita, where an aerial cableway taps one of Colombia's isolated and populous mountain regions.

That was of course wonderful and interesting as still another attempt to overcome the transportation difficulties which impede the development of all Andean countries; attempts which, in a journey



from the interior to the coast, or vice versa, one may see in every stage of their evolution; from canoe and raft through river-boats, old and new, to sea-sled; from mule and ox-cart to railroad and motor-bus, cableway and aëroplane.

But when I gazed out of the car window at Mariquita, it was not upon the laborious miracles of ambitious man that my mind dwelt, but upon a day more than three centuries ago when the conqueror Quesada died of leprosy here at Mariquita. It was on the last day of his eighty eventful years that Quesada made the will in which he left a sum to provide that on the hill of Limba there should be always a jar of water for wayfarers. The place, he said, was hot . . . and there was no water near at hand.

Thus Quesada, in the pain and fever of the end, remembered . . . remembered the hot exhausting marches of his long-past youth, and, remembering, provided a jar of water on the hill of Limba. . . .

After Mariquita there is Honda, and, after Honda, darkness came. Sparks thrown out by our engine ignited the dry grass along the line, and little licking flames spread until they penetrated the forest, which here and there became a forest of fire, in which the trunks of trees glowed red in the darkness.

Sometimes in stretches of lonely darkness the train came to sudden and meaningless stops, when for no apparent reason, we halted in the stifling night.

Then at last there was La Dorada, and our waiting boat quite dazzlingly electric, and crowds of dusky gesticulating porters clamoring to transfer luggage.

The boat was one of the newest of the river-steamers, with tiny single cabins, positively surgical in their immaculate whiteness; each furnished with an electric fan, a wash-basin, a mirror, and a narrow canvas-covered bed. There is nothing more; for the traveler is expected to provide his own soap, towels, sheets, blanket, pillow, and pillow-case, as well as the essential mosquito bed-net.

But it is not so troublesome as it sounds. One learns to organize one's necessities, and in a few minutes the clean, bare little cabins are transformed into cool fragrant havens of rest.

Our swift preparations were almost complete when the Franciscan monks appeared to wish us good night and to say that as they were sleeping on deck they would be grateful if we would take charge of their valuables. I love to remember that to strangers traveling in their land, to acquaintances literally of a day, these monks intrusted the

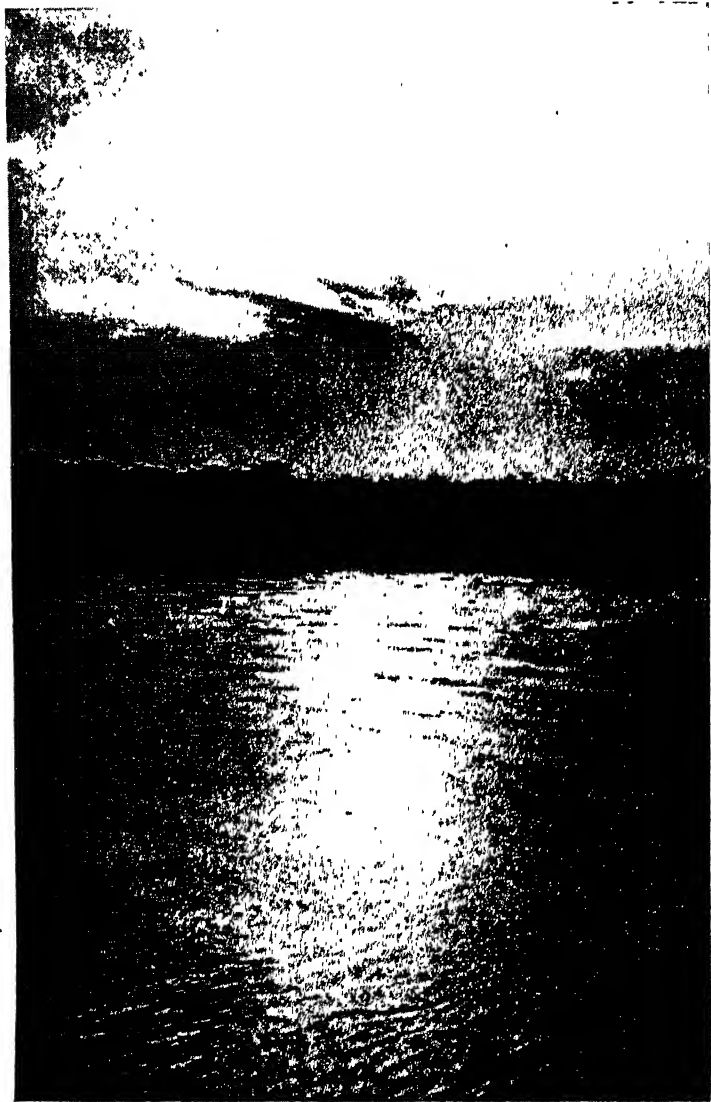
little black hand-bags containing all the earthly goods with which they were moving from one religious cloister to another; bags containing perhaps money to defray the journey, perhaps a few cigarettes, and certainly many medals of the famed Virgin of Chiquinquirá.

And we had already retired to the comfort of the tightly stretched canvas beds, used all over the hot country of Colombia, when the inadequate cabin-boy announced that because the river was "so bad" we would not start until dawn. He spoke as though it were an unusual occurrence, but we later discovered that the river was always "so bad" that boats rarely traveled at night until within two days of Barranquilla.

But we had slipped into the timeless mood of the Magdalena; when we started did not matter, and not even the loading of the boat postponed that profound sleep which follows the long days of travel in Colombia, where trains and sea-sleds, boats and aëroplanes all depart at the break of day. Indeed, nothing short of a tropical tempest disturbed our rest at La Dorada.

The tempest came with elemental fury of crash and flare and torrent, beside whose violence the rain which we saw come to Barranquilla, the soft showers which fell upon the bananas and the faint





THE MAGDALENA — AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

drizzle of Bogotá, seemed scarcely worthy to be classed as rain.

It beat threateningly upon the flat roof over the cabins, falling like a heavy weight rather than like raindrops. It lashed the waters of the Magdalena, which swirled past the forested bank to which we were moored. And in the lightning the jungle showed livid green.

Suddenly there had come into the night the thunder and flash of that tempest; and then suddenly all was again dark and calm, as though the whole performance had been turned on and off by some miracle-working switch. And, with its passing, it left the air so freshly cool that I groped for a blanket.

Macaws flying high and calling as they flew announced the day, and I waked to find that close on the starboard side a dripping green forest slipped by.

Above Beltrán we had been conducted by a circuitous stream through a country of stark fluted hills, of elusive subtle coloring; rocky painted mountains seen through the shimmer of dust-dry haze; but the spirit of the Magdalena seemed to dwell not in that bizarre country but here where deep jungle shuts in the gleaming breadth of the river,

the fashion of Latin-American head-lines, fragments of which my mind had retained.

And the monks chimed in with the suggestion that we send a cable to announce that "peaceable monks of the order of San Francisco, unprovided with pistols, traveled for the first time the Magdalena and greatly desired to see alligators."

But no alligators appeared, and even the small boy from Anolaima wearied of watching for them and turned his attention to my notebook.

"Are you writing a book, *mi señora*?" he inquired politely.

"Yes."

"Describing your impressions?"

"Yes . . . why don't *you* write one?"

"I had thought of it" . . . very gravely . . . "but I gave up the idea. It requires too much thinking to make it sufficiently pretty."

There was thus no *ennui* on our Magdalena boat, the mere fact of existence being to the Colombian traveler important, and every detail of the journey absorbing. There was always talk, unending stories of the vicissitudes of river travel. Those who were experienced in the ways of the Magdalena had much to say of the difference between traveling with or against the current. We might come down in five days if . . . always if . . . luck were with us; but

no one could hope to go up in less than eight; and that also if one were lucky, and if one took an express oil-burning mail-boat which didn't even have to stop for wood.

But the Magdalena was no respecter of mail-boats; and an *Expreso* was just as likely to get stuck as an *Intermedio*, the slow boat often proving to be the tortoise in the race. It was all a gamble on the whims of the river.

Sitting around the table in the little screened-in dining-room, these fellow-passengers described to us the Magdalena of their grandfathers, when people contemplating a trip on this difficult river made their wills and said possibly final farewells to family and friends.

Travel in those days was by *champan*, and a *champan* is a large stout raft, the center of which is covered by a low-arched shelter of bent bamboo, thatched with palm. The *champan* is propelled by sails when there is a bit of wind, but chiefly by poles, for wind is rare in the mountain-bounded valley of the river.

It used to require from one to three months thus to ascend the Magdalena.

We knew how hot it was when we stopped to take wood! . . . Well, that was how it was always on slow-moving *champanes*. And in the days of the



grandfathers there had been no comfort of ice or of electric fans, no variety of food.

The journey had been an imprisonment in the confined space under the thatch, where clouds of mosquitos swarmed, while, slowly toiling, men poled, singing sometimes a wild song as they poled; and then silent, dripping in the heat.

Many had died on the way. There had been a viceroy and his vicereine, accustomed to the regal splendor of Madrid. They had made the trip in the record thirty days, with at every point relays of the best and freshest rowers, and with all possible arrangements to supply palatable food.

But the poor vicereine had been unable to endure the realities of primitive tropical life on the great hot savage river shut in by terrifying jungle. Her child, born prematurely on the way, had been buried on the bank of that cruel river, and the viceroy had died a few days after reaching Bogotá.

Such was the terror of the journey for those used to the life of courts that one viceroy had governed from Santa Marta and another from Cartagena, refusing ever to attempt the perilous trip to Honda and the arduous ride over the Andes.

For nearly three centuries this was the way to Bogotá.

Then a hundred years ago had come the steamboat.

The captain had a book in which we might read the history of steam service on the river.

And, sitting at ease in our rockers, we read; spanning the years from the earliest steam enterprise in 1824 to 1911, when the first of the river-boats was equipped with electricity, to 1912 when the first ice-plant was installed. The record is dotted with the words "wrecked" and "foundered," as the history of Bogotá is punctuated with the word "earthquake."

Man's battle with the river condenses itself thus:

Steamer lost by explosion of boilers. Service abandoned. New attempts: German, English, North American, Colombian. Draft reduced from five feet to three and a half feet. Stern-wheels substituted for side-wheels. Losses during the years: against a bank; in collision with another boat; foundered; burned; explosion and total loss; lost on the rocks; ran against a tree-trunk while descending the river; lost in the rapids of Honda; by explosion; ran against a rock and foundered; burned; ran into a tree-trunk; lost on the rocks; foundered. . . .

And the tale of these disasters concluded often

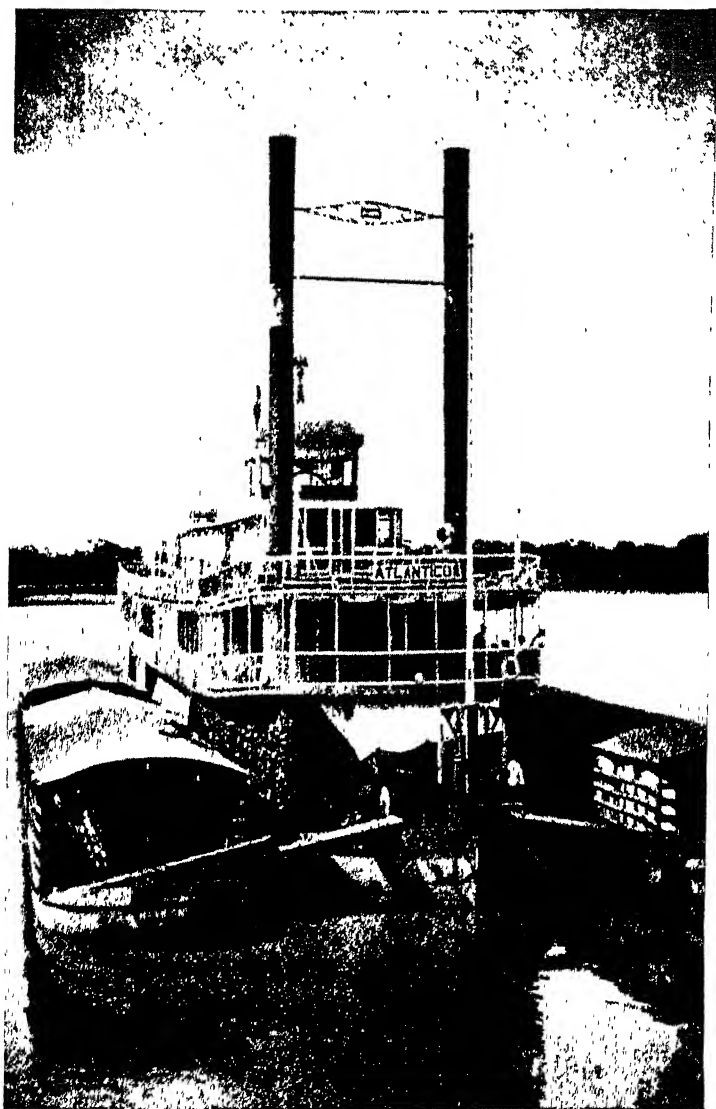
with the information that "crew, captain, and passengers had perished."

No wonder their grandfathers had made wills and farewells.

But still the Magdalena is the most traveled and the most practical route into the interior of Colombia; and still the *champanes* of Indians are seen upon the river; while among the older steamers many are reminiscent of those early days. Such was the old *Vasques* in which some weeks before we had traveled from Calamar to Barranquilla, and in which we had found a hen in possession of what did duty as a bath-room. But even the *Vasques* was provided with rockers; for, whatever you lack, you may rock down the Magdalena.

After taking many sacks of coffee we left Puerto Berrío in company with four other boats, the progress of each of which became an everlasting topic, the news of those ahead being retailed to us whenever we stopped for wood, just as we were doubtless added to the news broadcasted to those which followed us.

There would be gossip of the *López Peña*, which had been disabled somewhere up the river, and of the *Barranquilla*, which all the way down was reported to be just ahead of us, having "slept" at this



A MAGDALENA RIVER-BOAT



point or that. And there was the *Caldas*, which had preceded us by some days.

The poor *Caldas* had been unfortunate. It had stuck fast in the mud below Puerto Berrío; and later there had been an explosion of one of its boilers, and all on board had had to be transferred to another boat, arriving thirty-six hours late in Barranquilla.

Meanwhile, with on each side two loaded barges, our boat, the *Atlántico*, followed with maternal dignity the devious way of the channel; from bank to bank, now by the left branch around an island, now to the right, and again back to midstream. Sometimes there would be a menacing scrunch over the sand, and sometimes, to avoid running head on into sand or mud, the captain would shut off the engines, turn the boat sideways, and let the current carry it over the dangerous shallows, until it was safe to right it and to proceed at the usual speed.

On the deck below the rockers, men stoked the fires whose flames passed through tubes and around the boilers, two men feeding the fire and two more bringing wood. When the stokers threw down their iron pokers there was a sharp clang as pokers struck against ash-pans. There were heavy measured pulsations when the fires were being stoked and the engines exhausting through the two tall smoke-

stacks which on Magdalena boats stand side by side facing the bow. When the fire came up and the drafts were closed, the exhaust was shifted to two little pipes near the stern, and then the heavy throbbing would be suddenly softened, diminished, as though the engines were falling into a gentle sleep, maintaining the same rhythm but hushed.

All the way down the Magdalena we moved to this alternating pulsation. Heavy . . . heavy . . . Soft . . . soft . . . soft. . .

We thus knew when the fires were stoked and when the men rested and smoked. In the stern the big wheel, which is more like a cage than like a wheel, was turning; turning toward the boat and lifting the water in a fantastic waterfall; while we, in the stiff breeze of our going, sat wrapped in coats.

What was the day? We never knew. It was vaguely the end of the summer dry season of the year 1923, with the autumn rains coming in nightly tempests. And we were on a river-boat bound for Barranquilla; but arriving there did not in the least matter. The mood of the Magdalena is the mood of eternal flowing, ongoing life; an ever-changing but never-ending life.

In that long stretch of the river extending north from La Dorada to El Banco, it passes through a great uninhabited section, shut in by the gracious

dignity of primeval jungle. At long intervals, sometimes fifty miles apart, huts, solitary or in clusters of two or three, invited, with their stacks of wood, the patronage of river-boats.

From our rockers it was often possible to look through a break in the curtain of vines, into the cathedral depths of the forest, and to feel the architecture of the jungle; with its towering tree-trunks supporting the spreading branches of its roof, and the great roots which buttress those columnar trees, on whose silvery surface play the shadows of lesser trees.

There were hours when it pleased the river to mirror this lovely jungle, suppressing its detail and giving back only the shimmering spirit of the thing.

It is, the gods permitting, but four days from La Dorada to Barranquilla; but in the journey the river performs a miracle, and time stands still, dividing itself into impressions rather than into days.

There was thus the freshness of early mornings with turquoise and gold macaws, noisily companionable; stiff-legged haughty herons fishing along the banks; great blue herons and white herons and little dark herons; with kingfishers flashingly brilliant.

There was the heat of noons, when alligators



basked stupid and open-mouthed on uncovered sandy bars; alligators sometimes in groups of thirty or more, plentiful enough, now that the monks so ambitious to see them had left us for their cloister in Medellín.

And at noon we partook of the heavy breakfast served us by a barefoot youth in collarless and cuffless blue shirt, with mussy white trousers frankly supported by wide black suspenders, his shock of hair topped by a brown felt jockey-cap. He fed us an appalling number of courses, served on gigantic platters: *sancocho*, the native soup in which swim whole joints of chicken, whole potatoes, bananas, and sections of corn on its cob; *yucca* and *mamé* and pineapple.

There was always the sweet breeze of our advancing and the hot suffocation of our stops. And there were sun-sets the glory of whose changing color was reflected on the wide gleaming river, the river of flowing moods, rose and gold and violet in the rising and setting suns; at dusk still and calmly blue, as thoughtful as a mountain lake; again opalescent and fanciful, or sparkling copper in the sunny noons; a constantly changing river, changing its color and its course, dividing and subdividing, laying bare sandy beaches for its innumerable alligators; tearing away its own banks and creating

islands where there had been no islands, carving out new channels for itself; but always flowing, scorning the brief measure of our time.

Soft brilliant nights following fast upon the sunsets, and then for safety we were forced to tie up to the bank. Lying in the hot darkness under protecting mosquito-nets, we would listen to the vibrant voice of the jungle and await the refreshment of that furious nightly deluge which seemed actually to shake the boats moored upon the river.

Certain small events stand out among these impressions of the days.

Once we were stuck fast in the mud for an hour; and once in a great space between wood-pile huts we ran out of fuel, the steam-pressure dropped, and we were forced to burn the poles of our barges in order to move on to the next wood station.

There was an early morning when we docked at Puerto Wilches to take on more sacks of coffee and cases of cigars, brought down on mules from the great isolated Department of Bucaramanga. The sun beat fiercely upon the steaming vegetation of this tiny port, where in the shrubs orange butterflies swarmed like restless flowers. And at Puerto Wilches the little boat *Sofía* stole a march on us and went ahead puffing importantly.

We made a stop at Barranca Bermeja, to leave

fruit for the Tropical Oil Company; and another, at Gamorra, which with its heat and its mosquitos, recalled the sufferings of Quesada's band of conquerors on that first exploration of the Magdalena. There had been a point, perhaps at what is now Gamorra, when even the fortitude of conquering Spain had faltered, and Quesada in a lengthy speech had loftily commanded that "murmuring should cease."

Beyond Gamorra the character of the country began to change. The jungle was little by little receding, and there were more villages. From time to time tributary streams had joined the Magdalena; the Lebrija, the Carare, the César, but most important of them all, the sedate Cauca, sweeping in on the left.

On the day before we reached flat open cattle country, we made a sunset stop at the island of Santa Cruz, the island of the Holy Cross, negotiating the usual crab-wise landing, necessitated by the force of the downward-sweeping current. It was our custom to turn sideways, to drift to a point below the landing, and then, facing upstream, to approach the bank, with our engines counteracting the power of the current.

We had run almost the length of the island, and every inch of the way I had hoped we might stop;

for the island of the Holy Cross is the tropical island of one's dreams.

Its houses stand in single file along the bank, in which steps are cut down to the water, and at the foot of the steps dugout canoes are moored. All the waterfront is dominated by huge mango-trees, red with young leaves, darkly glossy with the leaves of maturity, and drenched with heavy drooping fruit. Little thatched houses gasp under the tropical luxuriance of banana and cocoanut, lime and orange and gourd trees, beneath which the deep shade is sun-flecked. Even the little church is thatched.

We sidled down past a landing and back again, while on the bank a tiny naked boy danced and clapped his hands in welcome.

With a sense of the preciousness of every moment we wandered eagerly about this island. The sun was fast setting, and in a few moments we would have taken on our supply of wood and steamed away; for in this lower half of the lower river it was at last safe to travel at night.

We explored, therefore, eagerly, finding the island's civilization to be almost independent of the rest of the universe. Gourd-trees provide dishes and utensils of all sizes and shapes; little gourds used as cups, larger gourds as eating-bowls, and still larger

ones as dishes or pans; others are cut into spoons, and many are carved and decorated with jungle dyes.

There are big earthenware jars of island make, woven straw sleeping-mats of rich colorful design, scarlet hammocks, and fishing-nets stretched in the sun. In stone mortars the women pound their island-grown corn, while in a primitive mill the sugar-cane is ground.

There is a noble cow and any number of pigs and guinea-pigs.

I saw nowhere any product of machine manufacture except the calico of the women's frocks and the heavier cotton cloth of the men's trousers. There were no diseased or maimed people, none in rags. Had there not been mosquitos in the ointment, the island would have seemed a perfect idyl, to us stopping at sunset for wood.

We came, we took wood, and we steamed away in the gold and purple afterglow, our captain having acquired a big red *boutonnière* for one lapel of his white coat, and the tiniest of bright-eyed green parrakeets for the other.

Three hours later the river mirrored the lights of Magangué. Brightly illuminated the *Junin* hurried by without stopping, whereupon the captain, whose heart had all the way centered upon the in-

termittent race with the four boats which had together left Puerto Berrio, announced that we might not go ashore, since he would spend but twenty minutes in Magangué.

They were the twenty minutes of a fantastic drama. Two wide flights of stone steps led up to the high embankment, where crowded the population; with rows of women squatting on the ground, their wares, chiefly guava jelly in small wooden boxes, spread out before them; and beside each woman her lantern; lanterns like footlights showing the skirts of the women red as glowing embers.

Behind the thronged waterfront were houses, like houses of stage-scenery painted on canvas; houses flatly without perspective, as though they might at any moment be folded up and taken away; houses with a varied roof-line against a painted night.

There was the roof with blue scallops, the roof finished by a railing, the narrow house which stretched itself into an upper story, where there was a balcony with a closed French window, done in white rectangles, like the rice-paper houses of Japan. And there were shops in this canvas street, the wide-open shops of the tropics, with goods arranged on shelves to the ceilings, and lit with the whimsical light of lanterns.

We were just pushing off, the captain impatient to overtake that impertinent little *Junin*, when a man gesticulating on the shore implored. Part of his possessions were on board, but his trunk had not come. "Run and get it," the captain shouted. The man set off at a trot. The crowd jeered.

And there soon came running his trunk, his boxes, his matting-roll of bedding, all at top speed, while citizens and passengers hooted; for on the Magdalena one is easily amused.

When we left Magangué behind we retained to illumine our heaven the shiny half-moon and the stars which had been pasted in the sky above the theatrical little town.

Under that sky we rocked, while from the shore the night spoke in a ceaseless hum. Once a heron with great slow flaps flew across our bow; ghostly pale, and strangely detached from its squawk. The sky became flecked with clouds, between which inquisitively peered the big bright stars. Before us the water foamed over the bow, as in the stern it was churned up over the revolving wheel.

And some one said that on the next afternoon we would be in Barranquilla. But what was to-morrow? Or yesterday? And surely there could be no Barranquilla. There could be only the Magdalena, sharing with us the flowing eternity of its dawns,

of its dazzling noons, of its glorified sunsets, and the stormy brilliance of its nights. While to the rhythm of the exhausts, heavy . . . and soft, we, like the river, went on forever. . . .



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LAND OF MIRACLES FROM THE AIR

THE chronology of a journey being insignificant, it is immaterial that our flight over the Land of Miracles preceded by some weeks certain of the impressions already set down. But it is important that the aëroplane should stand in the book where it stands in the country; removed by four hundred years from the days of the sorceress; standing at the end of the past, and on the threshold of the future. . . .

The adventure began on the night before we were to fly. It took on the color of reality when at dinner on the veranda of the *Peñsion Inglesa* in Barranquilla a man—a barefoot native—came and stood quietly beside our table.

“The automobile from the *hydro-avión*,” he said, “will call for you at a quarter to five in the morning.”

He spoke as calmly of a hydroplane as though he had said, “To-morrow, señor, at a quarter to five the mules will be at the door.”

After dinner we sat in a swinging seat under the trees on the grounds of the Pensión. Sitting there in the silky night, with a cool breeze rustling in the palm-trees, my mind went back to the day when, on our way to Ecuador, a fellow-passenger had told us of the hydroplane service just then being initiated on the Magdalena River.

To fly up that famous river, from the coast into the heart of the Colombian Andes, had become at once my great desire. That my first flight should follow the course of that particular river possessed my imagination.

I had put away the fascinating idea of this flight in the most important pigeonhole of my mind. Then two years later, with the Ecuador book finished, the alluring plan had passed slowly through the stages of possibility and probability and at last into certainty.

But all this time it had been only a gorgeous adventure. I had not foreseen the part it was to play in my realization of Colombia. Thus, on the night before our flight, I remained in that simple kingdom of adventure.

This hushed anticipation was followed by an hour of feverish packing, for we made the disquieting discovery that our bags weighed seventeen pounds more than we had estimated.

In Colombia one flies by weight, and not only is there a high charge for excess, but beyond a certain weight the planes will not rise from the water. The amount of luggage is therefore both financially and physically limited. As one proceeds inland the atmospheric conditions make this problem of rising increasingly difficult, and the Scadta Company—which, being interpreted, is the *Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aereos*—had warned us that our luggage must be reduced to the fewest possible pounds.

Thus at the last moment we frantically eliminated all luxuries and many necessities. Even our linen dust-coats we decided were too heavy to take. An umbrella and rubbers were discarded. Medicines were thrown overboard.

When finally the trunks which were to be left behind were strapped and locked, we once more went over the contents of our two hand-bags to see that nothing remained which could be cast away. For the dozenth time I inspected my flying-garments, which I had laid out with anxious care. And at last I crept in under my mosquito-netting, to lie long awake staring up into its roof, vibrant with the sense of something wonderful about to be. I must have slept briefly, for before the *portero* came knocking at the door I was again awake.

I went out on the balcony. The royal palm in front of the house stood ghostly green in the flare of an electric light. It stood quite still in the breathless calm which follows the death of the night breeze.

All the world seemed hushed on that morning of anticipation. In its tense stillness I hurried into those garments which I had laid out the night before, with as meticulous care as though their arranging were my last earthly act. And when at half-past four the table-boy brought in the breakfast-tray, the electric lights had gone out, and the palm was very dark, a black palm in the dim timid light of dawn.

We went down to the office where Mrs. Meek, the English proprietress of the *Pensión*, was already on duty; she kept tropical hours and was always at her desk at five; it was nothing, she said, to rise a little earlier to see us off.

The pale light had slowly warmed the sky when the expected motor turned into the drive promptly at a quarter before five.

Even Mrs. Meek then shared our sense of excitement, for she began to scurry about saying she 'd intended to give us cotton. Now she could n't find any. Well, we must go. But we must be sure to tell them in the plane to give us cotton.

"Cotton for your ears, you know."

The motor stopped. It was a station-cart with lengthwise seats. There were the vague shapes of three men in the car. They were speaking German in deep guttural voices; for the Scadta Company, although a joint Colombian and German enterprise, is directed by Germans.

"Be sure," Mrs. Meek was repeating, "to remind them to give you cotton—" That . . . and that she would take good care of our trunks and bags until we returned.

And then the little light of her office was left behind, and we jolted out on the streets and through the sleeping town.

The streets were narrow, incredibly rough and dusty. We swung so alarmingly around curves that we had to cling to our seats, while we coughed in the thick choking dust.

We stopped suddenly. A man got into the car, and there was more German. It was light enough now to see the tanned florid faces of the men and the brown flannel and khaki in which they were dressed.

We drew up before another house. A native woman came in response to our horn. "Already he has gone," she said in the soft rapid Spanish of the coast.

And we went on. The little white one-story houses were now distinct.

Then at last we turned steeply down to the hangars.

There two machines had been dragged out and stood ready for flight—the *Bogotá* and the *Cauca*.

As our luggage was placed on the scales we dismissed the involuntary and futile impulse to discuss whether we should be weighed with or without our heavy coats. There was no evading the scales of the Scadta. They weighed, I felt, even one's thoughts.

After our bags and the camera were weighed we got on the scales. It was dark inside the hangar, and the men struck matches to read the figures.

Although we ourselves were fortunately within the weight allowed in the minimum charge of \$500, those two emaciated suit-cases, one camera, my note-book and pencils brought us up to thirty-nine kilos excess, for which we had to pay \$135 extra!

While the bill was being settled I walked over to the poised and waiting planes. The sky was now rose, and rose lay along the river. In the air was that brief freshness of a tropical dawn.

While I waited the *Bogotá* speeded up and shot whirring out over the water. She skimmed, left the river, and was off. She carried no passengers,

for she was loaded to capacity with gold certificates to the value of a million and a half dollars.

In Bogotá a bank had failed, the Banco López, the great house of López with commercial and agricultural and shipping interests all over Colombia. López had failed, and panic was threatened.

To prevent a demoralized run on all banks the Government had added two days to the Independence day holiday, which happened to fall on the date of our flight. During these three days of *fiesta*, planes were to rush bank-notes up from the coast and from the interior city of Medellín, while the Government, in collaboration with a monetary commission from the United States, organized a Federal Bank.

As I watched the *Bogotá* fly from Barranquilla, I felt that here was the last word in fairy-tales, with menacing danger banished by winged creatures flying to the relief of a beloved city. And, as though symbolic, the sky had become gold, and gold the water.

When we finally climbed up over the left wing and into the *Cauca*, about to explore the Magdalena from the air, that \$635 seemed absurdly little to pay for so glorious an adventure.

We took our places in the little coupé, built to

carry four passengers but never taking more than two on these difficult flights into the interior.

We speeded over the surface with swishing foam. But we did not rise. We ran across the river in the hope of picking up a helpful breath of air. We turned downstream. We ran upstream, but still in vain. We faced again toward the river's mouth, where we bumped over the waves until at last our pontoons were free from the friction of the water long enough to permit us to acquire the necessary momentum.

And then . . . then the river dropped away! Was it a foot away? No, in the time it took to think that, it was a yard. A yard? Why, it was ever so much more than a yard! The river had dropped and was still dropping. . . .

We were flying! Actually flying! The sun had risen in a salmon sky. It was a quarter to six, and we were flying . . . with the river now far below us.

Forty-five minutes later we passed the town of Calamar. It had taken us ten hours by river-steamer to cover the distance between Calamar and Barranquilla. We made that distance now by aëroplane in forty-five minutes.

As Colombia unfolded beneath us, I realized not only how flight is to annihilate distance for the travel writer, but I began to appreciate how it is to



supplement that close and intimate study which every author must make of the land he is to describe.

We beheld Colombia thus immensely unfold and reveal itself.

It showed us on the right the Dique, stretching away, a straight silver line between high green banks, connecting Cartagena with the great waterway at Calamar.

In the vast valley of the Magdalena over which we flew, there was water everywhere: lakes and ponds, streams big and little; ponds and lakes and streams; straight streams and serpentine streams and streams that seemed to flow in circles; the Magdalena itself dividing and subdividing, sending out gleaming arms to embrace green islets. And we saw it all with the wide, free vision of the air.

We calculated that in each hour of flight we were covering a distance which by river-steamer requires an entire day. When, at ten minutes of eight, the old Spanish town of Mompox was diagramed beneath us, we knew that we were two days by river from Barranquilla, which we had left just two hours before.

We were then flying low enough to get a sharply defined portrait of Mompox, with its streets geometrically laid out, its Moorish convent built about a square central patio, its church towers, its plaza

upon which faced the cathedral, and, over all, roofs of dull red tile.

I knew how hot and drowsy was the air in such a town, how blindingly the sun whitened the white walls of the houses, and how, from time to time, the bells in those massive church towers would summon to mass. I seemed even to hear those far-off bells, although in reality there was only the ceaseless deafening roar of the plane, which penetrated the protecting cotton in my ears.

As we flew there was mapped out beneath us the baffling problem of Colombia's transportation, upon which inevitably depends her commercial development.

This problem lay like a great colored print, on which mountains were indicated in blue, rivers in bronze and quicksilver, with plains like green silk, forests of deep, dark, thick velvet, and at far intervals little geometric towns on the bank of some navigable stream.

Upon this huge plan, huge in extent rather than in detail, for details were reduced in proportion to our height above them, there were clearly set forth not only the difficulties of Colombia's development but the achievements of the indomitable little animal, man, who, far from retiring in despair, has vowed to conquer.

The difficulties stood boldly out in the ranges of the great Andes, which run north and south, dividing the land into valleys and high mountain-circled plateaus, each isolated from the other by those precipitous heights which forbid intercommunication.

Rivers formed a gleaming network over this map, above which we flew. They seemed an afterthought on the part of Nature, whereby she would relent, to the extent of providing man with waterways. There, undoubtedly, she had spread out rivers, like some colossal chart of circulation. But the rivers twisted and coiled, with no ideas on the subject of straight lines and shortest distances; rivers now deep and now shallow, imitating all the idiosyncrasies of the Magdalena.

And there stood out also the achievements. There were the sixty-five miles of railroad from Calamar to Cartagena, the tiny steamers connecting Barranquilla with the brief stretch of the banana railroad to Santa Marta, and the seventeen miles of track from Barranquilla to the sea.

And then for a great distance there were no more railroads. There were only steamboats toiling up against the current or slipping easily down with the stream.

In looking out from the air over the vast unrolling panorama of Colombia, I suddenly understood that

studying a country without the aëroplane is like examining a human countenance bit by bit; an isolated eye, a detached mouth, an eyebrow; and then by an act of memory adding all together in the effort to see the face as a whole.

I learned to know Colombia intimately, feature by feature; but it was in the air that I saw in perspective the face of the land; and it was like looking upon the broad sweep of an artist's creation as it exists in his mind, seen in the mass with the detail to be developed later.

In no other way can the travel author so comprehend the contour of a land.

I considered the impression which I retain after a study of other great rivers. I took for example the Yang-tse, which flows from the western borders of China, across the huge territory of the Celestial Kingdom, three thousand miles east to the Yellow Sea.

And my memory I found to be made up of details, seen intimately, but without perspective.

I saw the brown fields of winter with everywhere grave-mounds lonely or in friendly clusters, graves brown against a lifeless sky. I saw high cliffs and giant reeds and clumps of green bamboo. And along the way I visited Chin-kiang, Nanking, Wu-hu, and Kin-kiang. I remember the trotting

rickshaws, the shops, and the soft glow of colored lanterns, globes of warm color.

Also I remember riots and dead Chinamen on the swarming Bund at Han-kau under the flaunting flags of then great nations, German and Russian, as well as French and British and American. And there still comes to my ears the mournful chant of toiling coolies.

All this I find indelibly etched. But I had seen no farther than the banks of the Yang-tse. I never knew what manner of China lay beyond my narrow horizon.

Thus I realized that through flight even the vision of the mind is extended.

At twenty minutes past eight we made our first descent: we landed at El Banco to deliver the mail; for the Scadta conducts the largest private mail service in the world, and El Banco in the Departamento of Magdalena is its first port of call. There we took gasoline and the mechanic inspected the spark-plugs.

When we rose from El Banco it was to pass through a frothy sea of cloud, soft and thick and white; on up above this cloud-quilt to clear air.

Through breaks between cloud and cloud I looked over to the perilous and isolated country of the

Motilones Indians, reached only by canoe up the César River. But the Motilones are seldom disturbed by adventuring canoes, and when they are, what are poisoned arrows for, if not to provide meat for the tribe?

The rumor of cannibals and the longest regular hydroplane service in the world! That is perspective indeed.

As we flew we could see, between the intervals of cloud, that we passed over stream and forest, miles of river and forest, forest and river, with only occasional and far separated villages.

We flew over Puerto Wilches and saw stretching away in a straight tidy line sixteen miles of railroad track; making a brave start in the direction of its goal, the city of Bucaramanga, five days' ride on mules over the eastern range of the Cordilleras. Sixteen valiant miles are all very well, but the Andes have yet to be scaled, and on the road to Bucaramanga mules can still afford to scoff at the pretensions of railroads.

After El Banco the horizon mountains drew closer. They had removed the haze in which they had been enveloped. They were nearer, higher and more distinct. With their approach the country had become less marshy. We had left behind the grassy fields and orderly rows of bananas.

We flew above forests across which drifted dark cloud shadows, forests where copper streams cut through deeply green masses of jungle. As we rose higher filmy clouds blew through us. They seemed to be going somewhere in a hurry. Far below was a lake. It seemed a little lake, and it was full of shadows, the shadows of trees around its margin and of clouds passing over it. The blue shadows on the tree-tops were deep dark pools with strange outlines. The river lay like a bronze serpent.

We often fell into pockets of air—holes in the air—and climbed out again, keeping our equilibrium by a continual sideways tipping of our wings. We tipped and veered, and then tipped and veered again. I felt that we had ceased to be a machine and had become a monster bird with powerfully vibrating heart and sensitive wings.

A little later we were descending above Barranca Bermeja, with the houses and offices and tanks of the Tropical Oil Company like mushrooms in hot glaring rows.

These buildings grew quickly larger, and all at once a tiny speck on the surface of the river became a canoe. There was a child in the canoe. The child became immediately a man. And the man had fruit piled on the bottom of the canoe.

We were turning, "banking" down to the river; turning sharply down with tremendous rush and speed and whirl. We skimmed low above the water . . . low . . . very low. We struck with a bump; a series of bumps, diminishing until we glided smoothly like the fastest launch in the world, and finally came skilfully to rest at Barranca Bermeja.

It was very hot at Barranca Bermeja. Our pilot sat on one of the pontoons under the shadow of a wing, while we took on gas and the mechanic replaced the used spark-plugs with fresh ones.

We waited under the inadequate shade of the projecting roof of a little corrugated iron shed. The heat was breathless. We fell into questioning talk with a group of men who had gathered to see us land.

"Had the *Calamar* passed yet?"

"No, señor."

"The *Ayacucho*?"

"Not that either."

"The *Pérez Rosa*?"

"Nor that."

Boats which had left Barranquilla days before the *Cauca* had lifted herself into the air to fly for Girardot six hundred miles into the interior had not yet passed Barranca Bermeja. We had flown over them, indistinguishable specks on the river, crawling



up against the swirling current at the rate of four miles an hour.

From Barranca the run to Puerto Berrío is short, and there we had also mail to deliver. And there the pilot allowed us a "little half-hour" for lunch.

No Arabian Night's tale was ever more glamorous than that lunch. The sun was as dazzling as the sun in a fairy dream of the tropics. The palms were as strangely beautiful as palms seem for the first time, or, after a long absence, much as a spirit might regard them who had returned from other worlds to look once more upon straight smooth-columned palms lifting regal heads about a white and balconied hotel; a hotel which was approached from the river by a long flight of steps, also white and hot in the fairy sun; steps up and down which nothing would be too marvelous to pass.

So upon return to earth from the air is a spell cast over all things. Yet does this enchanted world seem somehow more real than reality.

For the travel author who seeks ever to keep alive the child-wonder in his soul, there is in such return to earth an enhancement of young wide-eyed delight.

The lunch at Puerto Berrío had the fleeting as well as the magic quality of a dream, for it was indeed a "little half-hour" that our pilot had allotted. And in obedience to summons delivered by a brown

urchin we hurried down those long steps to resume our places in the hydroplane *Cauca, A-9*, waiting to fly to Girardot.

In the river we found moored a sister plane, the *Santander*, waiting for the train from Medellín which was to bring more bank-notes to avert the threatened panic in Bogotá.

At Puerto Berrío I am convinced no breath of air ever even faintly stirs. We vainly manœvered up and down the river. It was impossible to rise. The pilot passed over our two bags to the *Santander*, which was to follow us.

We made another attempt, and, relieved of just those few pounds, we skimmed the surface, and so lightly did we touch the water that we left only the merest line on its sheen. We skimmed, and suddenly the river dropped. . . . We were up!

The miracle of ascent was by this time sufficiently familiar for me to analyze it in penciled notes:

Up . . . We rise as if lifted by great breaths. The breaths come in big puffs as though a giant breathes, refills his lungs, and breathes again.

Lift. . . . Soar while the giant inhales. Lift. . . . Soar over broad river.

Lift . . . soar . . . tip the great wings to maintain balance.

Fall into an air-pocket . . . lift . . . tip . . . and  
soar. . . .

A copper river comes flowing into the Magdalena.

Lift . . . with the powerful breath of the giant.

Lift and soar. . . .

Blue haze lies on the mountains. Blue as the sky.

Pocket . . . lift and tip.

We tip with that slight rocking from side to side.  
And always we vibrate with the force of the engine's  
explosions, and always there is the beat, the throbbing,  
ceaseless throbbing of the exhaust.

There is no word to describe that all-pervading,  
deafening sound; for language was made before  
men flew.

A white sand-bank glistens in the middle of the  
river.

We fall into a series of pockets. We climb out.  
We soar and rock.

There are fewer cloud-shadows on the land.

Our breeze stiffens. The great throbbing buzz is  
louder.

Pocket.

Lift.

Mountains like blue waves on the right, like waves  
of surf rolling in.

I am oddly not conscious of speed but only of the  
lift and fall, the rocking of the wings, and the vibra-

tion. But none of these things, even the violence of the breeze, gives me a sense of speed. The ever-changing landscape itself does not move. It simply changes.

There is now a lake which magically becomes a forest and again a lake; a forest turns into a peak, and suddenly the peak becomes a river of burnished bronze.

The mountains have advanced on their march to the river's bank. The valley shrinks before these encroaching Andes on which lie purple shadows, large still shadows.

We lift and rock and soar. We look at the valley through blue haze. In the lap of the hills lie fleecy clouds. We climb to more steady air with a mighty lift which makes me catch my breath.

The *Santander* passes us bound for Girardot direct with a million and a half in paper money and our two travel-worn suit-cases.

Here I felt a greater sense of altitude than earlier in the day, even than when above the clouds beyond El Banco.

I put my head out of the window and look down through space to the earth. I have so loved the beauty of that earth that it is strange I should glory in the sensation of complete severance from it. This severance is a separation more absolute than

death, for in flight not even one's dust and ashes remain upon the familiar little planet.

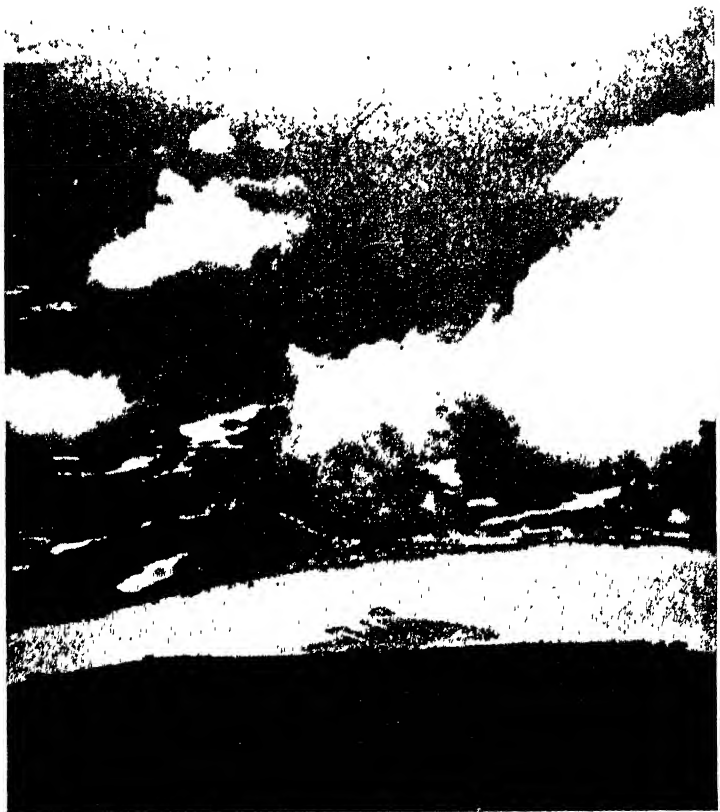
I love to realize this space and this severance—to dwell upon it.

For up there in the air, gazing down to a little earth with which one has no longer any tangible physical connection, things fall into their proper places, and one comprehends in a radiant flash what is of moment and eternal. All else fades and has no significance.

This perspective differs from the perspective of memory. Memory is personal, dear, and essential; but because of the very closeness of this intimacy it often fails to escape prejudice. The detachment of flight encourages impersonal perspective, and impersonality makes for fairness and justice.

I look down. There is a little boat on the ribbon of river, but I know from its shape that it is one of the big flat river-steamers, just a little creeping thing. It is easier to picture an ant-hill seething with emotion than to realize that such a slowly moving speck should carry that vital cargo of tenderness and greed, cruelty and kindness, peace and ambition.

These specks which are boats seem so small as they move on the face of the river, and the river itself so small in the mountain-circled valley. The



THE MAGDALENA FROM THE AIR

alarming sound in the engine. He explains in his German-Spanish that repairs are necessary before we can go on. They will take at least two hours. Perhaps more. Meanwhile he will telephone to Girardot for another plane. But it is Independence day. Offices are closed. He is unable to get the message through.

We cannot land at Girardot after dark. And all our luggage has flown on in the *Santander*. We are in Honda without a tooth-brush or a mosquito-netting.

I sit in the shade, on the roots of a spreading tree, a *bonga* tree. To these new casualties by the way the air traveler must adapt himself, just as formerly he was philosophical about fording streams, or about mules which elected to roll while his most treasured belongings were still strapped to their backs.

So I sit waiting, strangely not for mules, but for the engine of a hydroplane to be repaired.

Because it is a holiday, the citizens of Honda are strolling about in their best clothes. They come to stare and to ask where I came from and where I am going and why. I fan with the little Japanese silk fan which all through the hot country I have worn on a chain around my neck and I reply as

truthfully as may be to those still unanswerable questions put by the citizens of Honda. Where are we going and why? The answering is the miracle for which the heart of man eternally waits. . . .

Meanwhile the mechanic and the pilot bury their heads under the hood of the engine.

"The magneto," they explain, not very illuminatingly to me, I confess. "The magneto is a tooth behind." With that they disappear again under the hood.

And the citizens of Honda, having obtained from me all possible information, return to impart it to the rest of the population, leaving me to meditate and fan.

"This," I reflect, "this is Honda."

Over the grim bare mountains which come down to the river, still climbs the old Muisca trail, which was for centuries the only way into Bogotá.

Once all the varied life of that capital passed over the trail. Plenipotentiaries, viceroys, and bishops, fine ladies and generals, pianos and Paris hats, all traveled the Muisca trail on mule back, three days' journey up from the river.

The Girardot-Bogotá Railroad is comparatively recent, and with its completion riches and elegance deserted the old trail. Freight-rates, how-



ever, are high, and long lines of mules still carry sacks of coffee down to the river-boats at Honda, journeying slowly back with goods from the outside world.

But the Muisca trail can never recover its lost importance. As the river-steamers have changed the river and the life upon the river, affecting even the jungle which mirrors itself in the rapid current, so the coming of the railroad has robbed the trail of its ancient splendor. And now the aëroplane has come. It may mean much to Colombia, whose river system seems predestined to furnish hydroplanes with landing facilities. It is but two years since the installation of air service in Colombia, and already there is evidence of a miracle wrought in that difficult problem of Andean transportation.

The planes flew into a great and unsolved puzzle where fractions of railroads came to sudden and untimely ends, dependent for their extension upon the raising of the vast sums required to conquer the Andes. And at these abrupt stops the traveler would take what in South America we call the "hurricane-deck of a mule"; or he would be at the mercy of some river-boat, itself at the mercy of the volume of water flowing over the river-bed. At the terminus of navigation he might find another fragment of completed railroad, or it might be that it

was an ox-cart, or possibly a lurching motor-bus, to which he must transfer himself and his chattels.

After years of struggle, this great country of nearly five hundred thousand square miles is served by these uncertain river routes and by bits of railroad, possible only where geographical difficulties have not been too great or their mastery too costly.

I add together these portions of completed track—here a run of 16 miles, there 21 miles, 17, 60, 144, and so on; fifteen of these fragmentary lines, with a total of only 777 miles, while one route is separated from another by vast piles of menacing heights still unconquered: remaining as primitive as when the white man first came, zealous to carry the cross where gold might be found. Seven hundred and seventy-seven miles of railroad, and already the regular air routes cover nearly eight hundred miles.

It was through the experience in the air that I became acutely conscious of each step in the struggling development of this land where Nature has placed the Andes like monster bunkers, as though she used them to add piquancy to the difficult game which we call progress. Thus from the air I comprehended the vision and the courage which each move in the game had cost, as it was played in Colombia. I was made aware of the effort, the disheartenment, the failure, the sacrificed lives, the

triumph, and finally of the magnitude of what remains to be performed in this country, the extent of whose wealth is not yet even estimated.

What the future holds depends upon the development of the plane itself; the reduction in cost of its operation and the increase of its "useful load."

Much that is now considered impossible may yet come to be, just as the once impossible *aéroplane* has come to be. In considering the future of air service, flights of fancy seem therefore legitimate; and of these flights, one not incredible dream is that now undeveloped countries may adopt air service, without ever going through the intermediate stage of extensive railroad systems. As many of our newer cities skipped altogether the horse-car period, beginning life with modern electric transportation, so it is not beyond probability that countries difficult of railroad exploitation may to a large degree eliminate that sort of traffic and take at once to the air. For, after all, are not such miracles the order of our time?

Thus, uncaging my fancy, I reflect, as I sit in the heat under the spreading tree at Honda. But when a line of mules trots in the dust of the trail just beyond the tree, for one little moment I would sweep away even the marvel of flight if I could go back to the old days on the Muisca trail!

It was then that the pilot and the mechanic and the German language at last emerged from the depths of the hood to announce that we might start.

We rose easily and lightly out of the scorching valley of Honda. The giant was again lifting us with mighty puffs, lifting us up through rough air to air as smooth as new macadam.

The Honda trail crawled over the mountains until we saw it as a mere thread which we were soon too high to distinguish any longer.

Somewhere on our upward climb the *Santander* appeared, coming to the rescue, for we were long past the hour we were due in Girardot; but as we waved "All 's well!" she continued on to Puerto Berrió.

Her passing left us in a world inhabited only by mountains. The forests of the Magdalena Valley had disappeared, and so had the wide valley. The river no longer spread itself over the map. It twisted at the bottom of ravines which separated mountain from mountain.

In the singularly clear light so characteristic of the high Andes, the mountains shimmered in color; violet and mauve, rose and orange; uncertain patches of translucent color with vague shifting outlines.

As we mounted, the Andes themselves seemed

also to mount, to become higher and again higher; range upon range to the horizon.

I got a sensation of sheer height, towering height, unlike anything I ever experienced from the ground, even in the grandeur of the Himalayas.

The sun was low and dazzling. We flew high. We were no longer lifted. We fell into no more air-pockets. There seemed even no slightest rocking of the wings. There was only vibration, the great throbbing roar, and, when I put my head out of the window, the strong rushing wind.

The sun was sinking fast. On the right the snowy dome of Tolima, chaste and symmetrical, lifted its head from a cloud-lake of flame.

All about us were piled high these Andes, and there were Andes below us, for we had left the winding course of the river and were making a short cut over a range whose jagged upturned edge was like a colossal saw. These were painted mountains, as colorful as the Grand Cañon, while their deep gorges caught and imprisoned purple velvet shadows.

An ever-changing opalescence played over the snow summit of Ruiz. Tolima now stood coldly, deathly white against a fantastic cloud of midnight blue. Then in a moment the sun was gone. And there, hovering above Girardot, six hundred miles from Barranquilla, we saw, as only an aëroplane

could show us, the majestic glory of the sun setting upon the stupendous Andean world.

Again I was overwhelmed by a sense of expectancy, like the quivering suspense which precedes rain; a sense of something about to be, as though miracle were to follow upon miracle, the miracles of yesterday, and even of to-day being altogether inadequate, the soul of man demanding something more.

It was because man had sufficiently desired, that flight had come; for, as the serpent says in Shaw's "Back to Methuselah": "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create what you will."

And in the hovering moment before our descent from the high wonder of that Andean sunset, anything seemed possible. . . .

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